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No 33

UPRIGHT AND HONEST

or Harry Hale's Struggle
to Success



by
HENRY HARRISON HAINES

Like an arrow from a bow, Harry started for first base, shouting at the top of his voice: "Everybody run!"

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UPRIGHT AND HONEST;

OR,

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By HENRY HARRISON HAINES.

CHAPTER I.

FROM WEALTH TO POVERTY.

"Harry, it looks blue for us."

"How bad is it, George?"

George West shook his head mournfully, as he looked over the Prospect Park ball grounds.

"Why, it couldn't be worse, hardly. It is the last half of the ninth inning; the Bedford Blues have made three runs, we haven't scored a run, and we've got three men on bases, two men out, and it's your turn at the bat."

Well, that was pretty bad, and Harry Hale emitted a low whistle of concern.

The catcher of the Bedford Blues had broken his mask, and the delay attendant upon repairing or replacing it had given the boys time to talk over the decidedly unpleasant condition of affairs.

The West Siders had come over from New York to the outskirts of Brooklyn to play the Bedford Blues, and defeat was staring them in the face.

"They've got three runs, we haven't one; we've got two men out, and three on bases," he muttered, as he made a selection of a bat. "Well, George, I've just got the hang of their pitcher's curves, and I'm going to break this bat or else bring in two of our men."

Harry Hale was sixteen, rather tall for his age, with broad shoulders and deep chest, and the general physique of an athletic youth.

He was a handsome boy, too, and presented a noble appearance

as he stepped to the home plate at the umpire's call of "Play ball!"

He was captain of his nine, and he had fondly hoped to lead them to victory, but a couple of errors, a little bad luck, and, above all, the cleverness of the Bedford Blues' pitcher, had brought the New York nine to the verge of defeat.

All now depended upon him.

He could not hope to avert the impending disaster, but he could and would try to save his nine from the disgrace of a "whitewash."

He noted the grins on the faces of the Bedford Blues and their friends, and he set his teeth together resolutely as he grasped the unusually long and heavy club with a firm grip.

The clever pitcher gave him a sharp glance, and evidently judged him to be in a dangerous mood, for he inspected the ball very carefully, and rubbed the palms of his hands with great care.

Whirr!

Like a streak, the ball came toward the home plate. It was a trifle wild.

"One ball!"

With left foot well advanced, and resting easily on his right one, Harry Hale stood quietly waiting for the ball he wanted.

Whirr!

Another streak from the pitcher's hand, and it was a fair ball, too, but not the kind that Harry wanted.

"One strike!"

The West Siders looked uneasy, and the Bedford Blues grinned broader than ever, but Harry stood quietly at his station, his keen eyes fixed full upon the pitcher.

Again a fair ball came whirling from the pitcher's clever hand, but Harry did not move, for he did not think he could accomplish much by offering at it.

"Two strikes!"

His own boys murmured audibly, and some of the Bedford Blues laughed outright, but Harry Hale, his black eyes flashing, only set his white teeth the more firmly together.

Again that whirling sphere came, with immense speed, from the hand of the pitcher. It was a fair ball, and just what the striker wanted.

With all the strength of his well-trained muscles, he struck at it, caught it near to the end of the bat, and sent it sailing like a streak through the air.

Fair and true, over the center-fielder, and about ten feet in the air, went the ball, and it kept on and on with force and effect of that powerful blow.

Like an arrow from a bow, Harry started for first base, the coaches on the side lines shouting at the top of their voices:

"Everybody run!"

And they did run, while the fielders of the now astonished and aroused Bedford Blues rushed in mad haste after the ball, which still kept on its way.

A cheer announced that the man on third base had reached the home plate. A few seconds later another shout went up, as another runner scored, while the catcher, dancing in impatient rage, stood close to the plate and shrieked for the ball.

Another and a louder shout went up as the third man, the one who had been on first base when Harry struck the ball, also scored, and the captain knew that the game was now a tie. The score was three and three.

Harry had been running like a deer, and shouting to his men on bases, and now as he reached the third base, he turned his head for the first time and looked for the ball.

It was in the hands of one of the fielders, who was a very long way off, and in the act of throwing it to the man on second base.

Harry's foot touched the third base, and then he squared his shoulders, took in a deeper breath, and started, with increased speed, toward the frantic catcher, who was now shrieking to the man on second base to send it home!

Harry sprinted like a professional, his chin up, his teeth set, his elbows pressed closely to his heaving sides.

Ball and boy flew speedily toward the eager catcher, and the crowd fairly held its breath while awaiting the result.

Harry Hale made a supreme effort at the finish, leaped forward and slid across the home plate just a fraction of a second ahead of the incoming ball.

"Hurrah!"

What a mighty shout that was which greeted the remarkable performance.

Harry flushed with pleasure as he heard cheers and shouts of applause, and he felt like a hero when boy after boy pressed around him in eager excitement, rapturously shaking his hands or patting him enthusiastically on the back.

He had made a home run, and had brought in the three players on the bases, making the score four to three in favor of the West Siders, winning the game when it seemed hopelessly lost, and covering himself with glory.

There were many pretty young girls among the spectators, and one of these, a bright-eyed blonde, of about fifteen years, cried aloud:

"That was grand!"

Her voice was silvery sweet.

It caught Harry's ear, and he looked up, and their eyes met.

The pretty blonde held a small tasteful bouquet in one hand,

and, with an impulsive movement and a straight eye, she cast the bunch of flowers at the hero of the hour.

He caught it cleverly with one hand, and raised his cap politely, in acknowledgment of the attention. The young girl, who had acted on the impulse of the moment, blushed furiously, and turned to her laughing girl friends, who were evidently chaffing her.

Then the crowd closed around Harry, and he lost sight of his fair admirer.

He was half carried to the dressing-rooms by his overjoyed nine, and felt his whole frame thrill with pleasure when he heard the different remarks on all sides.

"What a hit!"

"It was the greatest I ever saw!"

"Just think of it. To bring in three men and make a home run."

"Yes, and to think of the nerve of him, letting them put two strikes on him, and waiting for the ball he wanted."

"He's a wonder."

Harry listened to it all, and swelled with honest pride, while dressing, and then when fully arrayed in his fashionable suit of imported cloth, made by a high-priced tailor, the lad walked out of the house with a proud air, accompanied by Rob Sanderson, George West and Arthur Forbes, the three friends whom he had driven over from New York to the ball grounds in his father's handsome surrey, drawn by a team that cost two thousand dollars.

For Harry Hale, be it known, was the only child of wealthy parents, who lavished a small fortune on their idolized son.

The team and surrey were under the shed at a hotel across the way, and with careless good nature, Harry tossed a silver dollar to the man who removed the sheets and backed out the rig.

Dollars came easily and plentifully to his hands, so he did not value them very highly.

In a few moments, they were bowling swiftly along on their way, the spanking team controlled by Harry's strong hands.

For a time, nothing but the hall game was talked of, and then George West suddenly asked:

"What are you going to do to-morrow, Harry?"

"I'm going to look at a big steam launch that is for sale cheap," answered Harry. "She is a very large-sized launch, not extra fast, but roomy and safe, and fitted up with everything for comfort and convenience. She cost something over three thousand dollars a little over a year ago, and now she can be bought for about a thousand, and I know my folks will buy her for me. I've got nothing to do from now until September, and I mean to have a good time. Will you fellows take a cruise with me?"

"Yes, yes."

"I will!"

"And so will I!"

"Where to?"

And the eager boys all turned to Harry.

"Well," returned the latter, "we'll take a cruise all along the shores of Long Island, and then we'll run up to Newport, then to New Bedford, to see the old whaling vessels, and then run down to New London, and then down the coast home again, stopping wherever and whenever we please. We can have our wheels on board, and can have good times wherever the roads are good."

"And be free as the birds," said George West.

"We can take our shotguns with us, and have sport in the woods," exclaimed Rob Sanderson.

"And we certainly will catch more fish than we can eat," assented Arthur Forbes. "What a nice thing it would be to send home a basket of fish packed in ice."

"Yes, and game, too," said Harry. "Well, then, it is understood that you three will be my guests for the summer. We'll fish, hunt, swim, eat, drink and sleep, and be like gypsies afloat and ashore, until next September."

"That's settled!" cried the other three.

And so they chatted all the way home, laying out plans for a summer of idleness, afloat and ashore, with Harry Hale for leader.

There was a policeman in front of Harry's handsome home when he brought the panting team to a stop, and talking to the officer was a resolute-looking, middle-aged man in plain clothing.

As the team stopped, this man seized them deftly by the bridle.

"Let go!" rather angrily said Harry. "They'll stand."

"They'll stand till yer git out, me lad," coarsely said the man, with a grin, and throwing back his coat, he displayed the badge of a deputy sheriff. "Git out, me darlings, and don't be the hull blessed day, either."

"What do you mean?" gasped Harry, who was almost breathless with astonishment. "This is my father's team and carriage."

"It was once, but it ain't now; see?" was the grinning rejoinder. "This 'ere rig is seized to satisfy a judgment, which it won't satisfy, by a werry long shot, me boy, and the dokkymment is here in me pocket. I thought yer was playing innercent, but I kin see yer really are so. Me boy, yer father's dead broke!"

CHAPTER II.

A MOTHER'S ADVICE.

As he slowly grasped the meaning of the coarsely uttered information, Harry Hale felt a sickening sensation pass over him like a wave.

His face grew deathly pale, and for a moment he trembled from head to foot.

The policeman who was standing near was a kind-hearted man, and having been on that beat for some time, knew Harry very well.

"It's quite true what the deputy says," he volunteered, patting the boy consolingly on the back. "I've seen the document in his pocket, authorizing him to seize any property of your father's which he can find, and as to the rest of his statements, I know them to be all true."

"My father is ruined?" gasped Harry, as he almost tottered out of the surrey.

"Yes, completely," answered the policeman.

"And he has—has—"

Harry stammered, and the kind-hearted bluecoat softly said:

"He has disappeared."

A seeming little chuckle from somebody behind Harry greeted this statement.

He drew himself quickly erect, and with a flash in his dark eyes, turned short about.

The sneering grin on Arthur Forbes' face showed that it was he who had laughed.

"So, Arthur," cried Harry Hale, calmly, and with dignity, "you are mean-spirited cad enough to find amusement in the misfortunes of a chum like me. When you gambled a short time ago, and lost money you could not pay, I paid your debts for you on your promise never to gamble again, and thus saved you from your father's anger. And you are the first one to laugh at my misfortunes!"

Arthur Forbes seemed to fairly shrink under the glance of contempt with which Harry favored him, and there was anything but a grin on his face when the rebuke was ended.

The deputy spoke up:

"Yer a manly sort o' boy," he said, regarding Harry with approval, "and I'm downright sorry to see a young feller of yer make-up in any sort o' trouble. Likely, yer've bin ter college: an' maybe yer learnt somethin', too, for yer've got an eye like a dimind; but now yer'll git what they calls a world's eddication, me boy, and the werry first thing yer learnt was about fair weather friends."

While speaking, he had comfortably ensconced himself in the seat lately occupied by Harry, gathered up the reins, cracked the whip, and with the final words and a nod to Harry, away he went.

Mournfully enough, the boy watched the splendid team until they disappeared around the next corner, and then with one last sigh of regret, he turned about.

"Well, boys, I don't suppose——"

And then he stopped short, for his three companions, while he was watching the departing team, had walked quietly up the street, and were now about half a block away, striding briskly along, not deigning to even turn their heads, and acting as though no such person as Harry Hale had ever existed.

The boy had to smile in very bitterness of spirit as he gazed after their receding forms.

"And they were to be my guests during the summer's outing," he thought. "They were going to enjoy themselves at my expense, and yet they can desert me like this at the first stroke of misfortune. That man spoke truly about fair weather friends."

Then he happened to glance up at the house, and caught a momentary glimpse of a beloved face looking cautiously out from behind a curtain of the parlor floor.

"My mother," thought Harry. "I am selfishly forgetting her."

He bounded up the steps, and made his way into the front parlor.

A sweet-faced, noble-looking woman of middle age arose to receive him.

"Harry," she sobbed, throwing her arms about his neck, "we are beggars."

"No, mother," firmly returned the lad, as he kissed his sweet mother's tear-stained face, and supported her trembling form, "beggars are dependent on charity, but you, mother dear, will only have to depend on me."

And he straightened up, with head erect, and eyes flashing with resolution.

Mrs. Hale checked her sobs, and regarded him with mild astonishment.

She was an intellectual and accomplished woman, and one of judgment and perception.

She saw at a glance that a change had come over her son, who, a few hours before, had no thought beyond a ball game or a cruise in a steam launch.

Misfortune had brought out all that was noble and manly in his character, and the unfortunate woman's eyes sparkled as she regarded him with a new admiration.

"Why, Harry," she said; "you talk like a man."

"No doubt, mother," he returned; "for although I am only sixteen, a boy in years, this trouble makes me feel like a man at heart. Now, sit down, mother, and just tell me how bad matters are."

"They could not be worse," was the reply. "We are absolutely ruined."

"Nothing saved?"

"Nothing."

"And father has fled?"

"Yes, and I feel worse over that than about everything else. He ran away to escape a debtor's prison, and made a misfortune ap-

pear like a crime. Your mother would not have done that, Harry."

"Nor my mother's son, either," assented the boy. "But what was the trouble?"

"Foolish investments, trying to turn a comfortable fortune into millions. Then came borrowing, then notes to meet the money borrowed, then protests and judgments. Everything is gone, Harry, and there are officers in the house now, putting seals on everything except just sufficient of household goods to enable us to start a little home somewhere else."

"Well, mother, it could be worse."

"My noble boy."

"Say your loving son," cried Harry, throwing one arm around her neck, and tenderly kissing her; "your son, who will take pride and pleasure in laboring for his mother's support."

"But what can you do, Harry?"

"Well, it is true I have no trade, but I have some education, unusually strong arms, and a willing heart. Anything that is honest will do for me, and I do not fear that I shall fail. I've never earned a dollar in my life, but I feel that I can do it, and, mother, I will! Well, I've got some gold medals for running, jumping, boxing, swimming and other athletic sports, and they can be depended upon for bread if the shoe pinches us too hard, but I feel that the same skill and strength which won those rewards can be depended upon for a living. Well, sir, what do you want?"

For just then a man entered the parlor.

He was one of the men employed in attaching seals to the various parts of the establishment.

"I want to finish up here," he said, in a rough and insolent style, ignoring Harry, and addressing Mrs. Hale, "so get out."

Mrs. Hale flushed, and paled, and drew in a deep breath at the man's insulting manner.

Harry's eyes blazed.

He took just one long step toward the man, caught him up with a grasp like steel, and fired him bodily through the open doorway.

The fellow landed in a confused heap on the floor.

With a roar like an infuriated tiger, the insulting fellow leaped to his feet, and rushed at Harry.

"Don't fight, my son!" anxiously called out Mrs. Hale, but, nevertheless, she was one of those high-bred women in whom admiration of manly courage and strength seems inborn, and her eyes fairly flashed with appreciation, when her boy quietly advanced his left foot, and met the fellow's onward rush with a clean left-hand hit that staggered him.

"Got enough?" he calmly asked the man, as the latter clutched the balusters to save himself from falling.

"You hit like a pile-driver!" growled the man, rubbing his bruised head. "But I'll be even with you yet for this, and don't you forget it!"

And with a glance of hate, which the boy recalled at another time, the man walked angrily away.

"Don't be angry with me, mother," said Harry, "for you must remember that now I am your sole protector. That man insulted you."

"Yes, I have been insulted in my former home of luxury. My boy, let us now go to the simpler apartment I have hired, where I shall at least feel independent."

"That's right, mother. Take my arm, hold up your head, and let us go forth to look the world in the face together."

She smiled a little at this, and arm in arm they walked forth from that home of wealth which they were to know no more.

It was to very modest apartments, indeed, that Mrs. Hale con-

ducted her son. Three small rooms on the top floor of a frame house in a second-class street, now contained their few possessions, but Harry felt a new sensation run through him as he set busily to work to put affairs in the rooms in order.

There was a gas stove included in the general arrangement, and on this Mrs. Hale, who had performed no work for many years, if ever, cooked a steak for herself and Harry and made a cup of tea.

Harry, young and hopeful, ate heartily, and said so much in praise of the food that he brought smiles to his mother's face.

"I never enjoyed a meal more in my life," said the brave boy, smiling at her, "and I'm sorry that you can't cook my breakfast for me, because I'll be up bright and early and away for a situation."

"Oh, Harry, without any breakfast?"

The boy laughed.

"That will not kill me, mother," he said; "and you must remember that the early bird catches the worm."

"It's awful to think of you having to work for a living like—like——"

"Like any common, everyday boy, eh, mother, dear? Well, I'm just that, you dear, foolish mother, and I'll be so proud that my hat will not fit me when I come home with money for your support. Why, when I think what a big, idle, good-for-nothing I've been, I could almost rejoice at the change."

Once again his cheerful, loving words brought smiles to Mrs. Hale's face.

"And you'll start out early in the morning?"

"Yes, mother."

"To try to get what sort of a situation?"

"Anything that the advertisements in the newspapers suggest as promising."

"Then, my boy," said the fond, proud mother, her face lighting up, "let me give you a little advice. I do not know much about business, but I do know something about the world, and I know what qualities, what methods, and what course of conduct are most conducive to success in life."

"Be upright and honest!"

"Let no temptation swerve you from the path of honesty, and remember that your own unblemished course in life must remove the shadow which your unfortunate father has cast over you."

"Be truthful! Tell the truth at all times when it is demanded of you, and screen neither yourself nor others by falsehood. Do this, and you need fear no accusation; do this, and you may look all men in the face."

And Harry Hale kissed his noble mother, and promised to remember and observe all that she had said, and when later in the evening he laid his head on his pillow, and fell asleep with the ease that belongs to youth and perfect health, he fancied he still heard her sweet voice saying:

"Be upright and honest!"

CHAPTER III.

SEEKING EMPLOYMENT.

Bright and early in the morning, Harry arose, and without waking his sleeping mother, stole forth in search of employment.

He bought two morning papers, scanned the "Help Wanted, Males" column with care, and jotted down a score of addresses which seemed to suggest the possibility of work.

Then he went to a second-class, but clean-looking, restaurant, and, with economy in his mind, ordered a cheap but substantial breakfast.

Feeling very hopeful, indeed, Harry Hale made for the first address on his list.

This was a hardware store, and a sharp-looking man was behind the counter.

"I've come about the situation, sir," announced Harry Hale.

"Oh, exactly. Where did you work last?"

"Nowhere, sir."

"Nowhere."

"I—I'm just out of school," hesitatingly said Harry, not feeling that it was requisite that his misfortunes should be told to every possible employer. "I never worked before."

"No business experience, eh?"

"No, sir, but I'm willing to learn, and would try hard to—"

"Don't waste your time and mine," brusquely broke in the hardware man, picking up a newspaper, and turning his back on Harry. "You will not do for me."

The boy felt a little dejected when he walked out of the store.

"But, pshaw!" he thought; "a boy can't have any business experience until he is in business, and somebody will give me a trial."

The next on the list was a big produce commission firm.

He saw men and boys sorting and sampling the barrels and crates on the floor, and it struck him at once that this was work which required only quick eyes and hands and general judgment.

"I could learn to do that rapidly," he thought, and strode hopefully into the office of the firm.

"Come in answer to the advertisement?" asked the manager.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you're a bright-looking boy. Brought your references?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"I haven't any."

"That settles it, then. I never employ people unless well recommended."

He turned sharply away, and Harry walked out into the busy street.

First it was business experience, and now it was references and recommendations.

Harry began to find out that it was not so easy to obtain employment, after all.

Still, he went to place after place, only to find, after his hopes had been raised by an encouraging reception, that people did not care to employ any one who possessed neither previous experience nor good recommendations.

It was nearly eleven o'clock in the morning when Harry turned away from the last place on the list.

"Well, well; who would have thought it?" murmured the disappointed boy. "There's one good thing, anyhow, that the laborers in the street do not require recommendations or experience, only brute strength, and I've got plenty of that, so if it comes to a choice between starvation and the pick and shovel, why, I suppose I can earn a living that way. How my chums would laugh to see me with the street brigade."

He had turned into Broadway while musing thus, and now stood irresolutely in the street, trying to make up his mind what he should do next.

Casually, he glanced at the sign over the store front before which he stood. It read:

"HERBERT, WAINWRIGHT & STRONG,

Real Estate and Insurance."

Inside the office, a number of people were transacting business.

At the curbstone stood a very elegant coach and team, the liveried driver and footman sitting bolt upright on their seats.

Harry, who was a great admirer of horses, glanced with interest at the span of bays.

Then, having nothing better to do, he looked into the busy office of Herbert, Wainwright & Strong, which looked like a human bee-hive.

Quite casually, he also noticed a neatly-dressed young man, wearing a dark suit, and a plain, dark derby hat, standing close to the hall door, at the side of the office, and holding the door slightly open.

Harry could not help favoring him with an extra look, because the man had an unusually long and sharp nose.

"What a nose," thought Harry, and then turned to look at the smart footman, who had just leaped down from his seat and opened the door of the carriage.

An elderly woman, richly dressed, had just come out of the busy office, holding a bulky envelope in one hand.

She gave an order to the driver, and then got into the coach.

The footman closed the door, and ascended to his seat.

The driver had just extracted his whip from the socket, preparatory to starting, when a man, bare-headed, wearing an ink-stained linen office coat, and carrying a quill pen in his hand, appeared at the open window of the carriage.

"One moment, driver," he said; and then, as the lady looked up, he added: "Mrs. Dobson, Mr. Herbert begs that you will pardon his neglect, but he forgot to include one collection in your envelope."

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed the occupant of the carriage.

"You need not trouble yourself to push through the crowd, Mrs. Dobson," went on the young man in the ink-stained linen coat, "as I can carry the package into Mr. Herbert, and he will send it out again in a couple of minutes with the added collection."

And he extended his hand to receive the big envelope.

"Please hurry up," requested Mrs. Dobson, and handed it over.

The bare-headed young man turned short around.

"Only a minute, madam," he said, and strode straight into the office.

Now, Harry Hale had been standing close to the carriage all this time, and something about the young man's face, as he stood there talking to Mrs. Dobson, fairly fascinated our hero's attention.

Suddenly an idea shot through his struggling thoughts.

He looked at the side entrance of the building wherein the real estate and insurance office was located.

The long-nosed young man who had been standing there had disappeared.

Harry was positive that when he had last looked that way the long-nosed stranger was there, and in the most natural manner the lad glanced quickly up and down the street.

Broadway was well lined, as it always is during business hours, but in those very brief seconds since he last saw him, the young man could not have gone many feet, and Harry looked in vain for a glimpse of the dark suit and plain, dark derby hat.

"Not in sight, and I saw him a few seconds ago," the boy muttered. "It can't be possible that there are two such noses in the city of New York, and yet he—aha! now I've got the correct idea, and I'll soon know the truth."

Harry Hale was a brainy boy.

He thought quietly and acted quickly.

As the bare-headed young man strode into the office, carrying with him the bulky envelope he had taken from Mrs. Dobson, Harry stepped swiftly across the pavement toward the slightly ajar side door.

He pushed it wide open, and looked quickly into the hallway.

One glance was enough.

On the floor lay a dark coat, and near it lay a dark derby hat. Harry spun around like a top, and ran into the office of the real estate and insurance firm.

He looked for the bare-headed young man with the ink-stained coat.

The latter had just drawn a double-up hat, of the "knock-about" style, from a hip pocket, and was about putting it on his head.

Harry leaped upon him like a tiger, caught him by one arm, and shouted, at the top of his voice:

"A thief! Help!"

CHAPTER IV. THE CAPTURE.

"A thief! Help!"

Such were Harry Hale's words when he sprang upon the clever trickster, and he confidently expected that the announcement and the appeal would bring aid promptly to his side.

He was disappointed in his expectations, however, for the well-filled office at once became the scene of wild confusion, a condition of affairs highly favorable to the rascal Harry had clutched by the arm.

He had taken a firm grip, but the hold was upon the loose sleeve of the fellow's coat, and did not include the arm. With a quick wrench, twisting about with great force, he freed himself from the boy's grasp.

Then he hit out as straight as any accomplished boxer could have done, for Harry's nose.

Taken off his guard, Harry did not have time to block the blow, but he did have time to do something else which his boxing instructor had taught him.

He ducked.

The movement was made too late, however, to wholly evade the blow.

He caught it with about half of its direct force, on the side of his head, and even that made him stagger, and turned him half-way around. Then the thief turned, and tried to bolt through the confused mass of excited people.

Recovering himself, Harry leaped after him, caught him around the body, gave him an English "cross buttock," and hurled him, with immense force, to the hard floor.

He arose quickly, being plucky as well as tough, but now Harry slipped behind him, caught his arms in a firm grasp, and held him fast, despite his desperate struggles.

An excited lot of people now pressed around them.

"What's all this about?" authoritatively demanded a middle-aged gentleman, coming from behind the railing.

"Are you Mr. Herbert?" asked Harry.

"Yes."

"Is this man in your employ?"

"No."

"I thought not, and yet he made Mrs. Dobson think he was, and obtained from her the big envelope you had just given her, saying that a mistake was to be rectified. I think I saw the package peering from his inner coat pocket."

As Mr. Herbert opened the young man's coat, the latter made a desperate effort to break away.

"Make another effort like that, and I'll lift you and dash you down on the floor!" sternly said Harry.

The fellow subsided.

Into one of his pockets went Mr. Herbert's hand, and forth came the valuable envelope.

"That settles it," he exclaimed. "This is the package of money

I handed to Mrs. Dobson less than five minutes ago, and it contains something over two thousand dollars. Mr. Ray, fetch a policeman."

But as one of the clerks started to obey the order of the head of the firm, the burly form of a blue-coated guardian of the peace appeared in the doorway, attracted by the crowd that the exciting occurrence had assembled.

"What's the trouble here?" asked the policeman, and then he caught sight of the fellow Harry was clutching so firmly by the arms, and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Why," he cried, "it's Nosey Green!"

"And who is Nosey Green?" interestedly inquired Mr. Herbert.

"Why, one of the cleverest confidence men in the country, and as slippery a cove as ever twisted out of a copper's hands," returned the officer. "Hold him fast, my lad, while I put the nippers on him."

"Oh, I'll go along all right," smoothly said Nosey Green.

"I know you will, when I get a good twist of the nippers on you. You gave me the slip once on a time, Mr. Nosey, and this time I'll make sure of you. What's the charge, sir?"

This was addressed to Mr. Herbert, who briefly narrated what had taken place.

The policeman looked with admiration at the boy who had captured the notorious confidence man.

"How did you spot him, my boy?"

In as few words as possible, Harry told just how the whole affair had taken place, and as he concluded his story, one of the clerks ran out and brought in the hat and coat discarded by Nosey Green.

"Well, this is a dead sure case against him, and you're a mighty shrewd boy to spot such a clever game and checkmate it," warmly said the policeman. "What is your name?"

"Harry Hale."

"And your address?"

Harry gave it to him.

"If I am not mistaken," said the officer, "I think there is a reward out for this party, and if so, you will certainly get it. Now, young strong arm," to Harry, "if you and Mr. Herbert will come along to the police station, and tell your stories at the desk, I'll be obliged to you."

"I'll go as soon as I restore this envelope to the rightful owner," said Mr. Herbert.

He returned the valuable package to Mrs. Dobson, with a few words of explanation to that lady, and then he and Harry walked along with the officer and the thief to the police station.

There they told their stories to the sergeant at the desk, and after due entries were made in the big blotter, they departed.

"Please come back to my office with me," requested Mr. Herbert. "I want to talk over this affair with you. That Mrs. Dobson is one of our best customers, and we have had charge of all her city property for years, renting, collecting and general management. She is a very worthy lady, indeed, but eccentric and uncertain, and if she had suffered the loss of that money in such a manner, she would have unreasonably blamed us, and we might have lost her patronage through no fault of ours. Now," putting his hand in his pocket, and drawing forth a plump-looking pocketbook, "if I could recognize your brave service—"

"Sir," hastily interrupted Harry, "I beg that you will not try to pay me for preventing a crime."

"You speak nobly, and I assure you that I did not mean to offer a boy of your stamp and appearance any money payment, but I thought you might permit me to purchase a present for you, such as a bicycle, or a ring, or some such trifle."

"It would still be taking payment for preventing the commis-

sion of a crime," firmly said Harry, "and I could not think of accepting it."

"Well, I honor you for expressing such a noble and unusual sentiment," said Mr. Herbert. "But I still feel that I want to do something for you."

"And so you can," rejoined Harry. "You can give me what I need—employment."

CHAPTER V.

GUSSIE HERBERT'S APPEAL.

Just as Harry made the request for employment, they arrived at the real estate office.

"Come into the private office with me," requested Mr. Herbert, "and we'll talk further."

A moment later, they were seated in the privacy of his personal office, and then Mr. Herbert, without saying a word, looked long and intently at the boy.

"You say you want employment," he at length said, with a little doubtful shake of his head. "But here, even if we needed anybody, only very moderate salaries are paid."

"Mr. Herbert," manfully said Harry, "just now you looked for two minutes at this suit which I am wearing, and I think I understand what makes you speak as you do, for the suit cost seventy dollars, and your employees would not purchase such clothing. When I buy another suit, I may be glad to get a ready-made one for about ten dollars. Yesterday I tossed a dollar to a man who cared for my father's team at the baseball grounds, but to-day I am seeking a situation for a few dollars a week, in order to support my mother and myself."

And then, while Mr. Herbert listened to him with interest and attention, he told the story of disaster.

"Ah!" then exclaimed Mr. Herbert, "you are the son of the Mandeville Hale who—~~who~~—"

Disliking to wound the boy's feelings, he hesitated for a bland term.

"Who ran away, Mr. Herbert," bravely added the boy. "Yes, I am his son, and I have walked the streets all this morning seeking honest employment."

"Which is highly creditable to you. Well, what do you understand?"

"Nothing in particular, but I learn easily, and am willing to make myself generally useful."

"But the salaries in this business are really very small."

"Do you pay any employee what he makes himself worth?" asked the boy.

"Yes."

"Then it depends upon my own efforts to make myself worth a big salary?" smartly said Harry Hale. "To start with, however, I'll take enough to buy bread and butter."

"That's well said," smiled Mr. Herbert.

"But I've got no recommendations from any previous employers."

"Your conduct this day is enough recommendation for me," warmly said the other. "You are a smart, intelligent and upright lad, and honesty is stamped on your face. Now, I will be frank with you; we really do not need any extra help at present, so the salary to start you must necessarily be small."

"Name it," said Harry. "It must be my business to warrant an increase."

"I will start you at five dollars a week."

"I will take it," promptly said Harry, and then he smiled.

"Why do you smile?" asked Mr. Herbert.

"Why, I was just thinking that five dollars is the sum I paid

for a sweater last week to use in bicycle riding. I didn't know the value of money then. Well, sir, will you be kind enough to tell me my duties?"

"Well, you will have a large number of small matters to attend to, but they will all help to pick up the details of this business. We handle real estate in all forms, buying, selling, renting, collecting, etc., and—by the way, you haven't too much pride to take a bunch of keys and show a floor or a house to our customers, have you?"

"I haven't too much pride to do anything that is honest and respectable," answered Harry.

"Well, you'll have to show apartments, collect rents, look after the insurances, write permits, and, in short, take part in all branches of our business."

"Very well, sir. When am I to begin?"

"When will you be ready?"

"I am ready now."

"Very good. Then you are engaged from this hour, and your pay commences at once. Let me see; it is just noon. Where did you intend to get your lunch?"

"At home with my mother, who will be pleased to hear that I have succeeded in obtaining employment."

"Very well. Now, there are some papers at my house which I desire to have brought here this afternoon. I will give you a line to my daughter, who will give you what I require, and you can bring them here after you have had your lunch."

He wrote a note, addressed it, and gave it to Harry.

Away went the boy, feeling happy that his quest for work had met with success.

"Five dollars a week isn't much," thought Harry Hale, as he strode homeward; "but if I am worth that without understanding the business, then the question of more wages is only a matter of time."

Quite enthusiastically, he burst into his mother's modest apartments, gave her a hug and a kiss, and told her of his success.

And then she called him a man, and laughed and cried in a breath, and after that they sat down to a plain, substantial lunch, which Harry ate with the keen appetite that belongs to a growing boy.

Then he gayly kissed his mother good-by.

"I'm off to work," he cheerfully said, and started for Mr. Herbert's house.

He found it at the corner of an elegant brownstone row, rang the bell, and in response to the inquiry of the servant who came to the door, he handed over the note addressed to Miss Gussie Herbert.

He was shown into a side room, while the note was taken to the person addressed.

A few moments later he heard light feet come tripping down the stairs, and then a girl of fifteen appeared in the doorway.

"This is Mr. Hale, I suppose."

The girl got just so far in a tone of inquiry, and then came to a sudden stop.

Her eyes grew large and round, and the rich color came into her cheeks.

As for Harry, although he prided himself on his self-possession, he blushed like a girl, and could not say a word.

The mutual embarrassment of the young couple is easily explained.

In Gussie Herbert, Harry recognized the pretty blonde admirer who had thrown him the bunch of flowers on the ball field, and the girl, of course, had recognized him.

The girl was the first to find her tongue.

"Why, you are the young gentleman I saw at the Prospect Park ball grounds, are you not?" she asked.

"I am," replied Harry.

"And you work for papa?"

"I do."

"Why," wonderingly said Gussie, "I saw you drive away with a team which my friends said was your own, and I thought you— you—"

And then she checked herself, and blushed redder than ever.

Harry Hale held up his head proudly.

"You thought I was a rich young gentleman, I suppose?" he said, quietly, but with an air of dignity.

"Yes, I did," responded the girl.

"So I was," rejoined Harry. "In one day all the wealth of my family was swept away, and I was compelled to seek employment in order to support my mother and myself."

Gussie Herbert glanced approvingly at him.

"That's all right," she said. "Money isn't everything in this world. How strange, though, that you should have found employment with papa. He says in his note to me that you rendered him a great service."

"He is really too grateful over a trifling matter," said Harry.

"What was it?" asked Gussie.

Modestly, and in clear tones, Harry told the story of the morning's adventure with the clever confidence man.

Gussie Herbert was a girl of spirit, and her big, blue eyes fairly sparkled as she listened to the exciting tale.

"That was grand," she cried. "I wish I could have seen it. I can see that you are brave, strong and honest, and I need help in a certain matter from just such a person. Mr. Hale, can I look to you?"

"I am at your service," gallantly said our hero, "and you may command me. But I am only sixteen, and would prefer to have you call me Harry."

"Very well, Harry," replied the sweet-faced blonde, with a little laugh. "I will do so on condition that you will remember that I am only fifteen, and would prefer to have you call me Gussie."

"I agree," smilingly responded the boy.

The girl's face grew grave, and, with a little quiver in her voice, she said:

"The matter in which I earnestly ask your aid is this:

"I have a brother, Frank, two years my senior.

"Frank is a good-hearted boy, and I love him dearly, but he is not the good boy he used to be.

"He is not very resolute; he is very fond of all sorts of dissipation, and he keeps me worried from morning till night.

"Papa is a good man, but there is one little defect in his character, which makes it hard for poor Frank. He is either too indulgent, or else too severe in the matter of correction. Consequently, he has helped to spoil Frank, and yet my brother fears him. The result of this is that they are drifting apart, and that's a bad thing for a father and a son.

"Papa knows that Frank has been carrying on wickedly of late, drinking, gambling, staying out late, and dissipating generally, and he has talked harshly to the boy.

"Now, Harry, more than once I have seen an expression on Frank's face which made me think that he felt like putting his arms around papa's neck and confessing something to him, but papa's countenance was altogether too forbidding. I can read my brother's face, and I am sure that there is something on his mind which he would like to say to his father, but he lacks the courage."

"Why not try to make him open his mind to you?" suggested Harry, much interested.

"I have tried to, and he only gives me evasive answers."

"He probably wants to ask pardon of your father, and promise to reform," said Harry.

The girl shook her head mournfully, and tears stood in her eyes.

"I'm afraid it's something more than that," she said, sadly. "Listen:

"My brother's most constant companion is a man named Harrington Mace, ten or fifteen years older than Frank.

"This man leads Frank into all sorts of dissipation, and I have heard enough fall from their lips to convince me that he has some sort of hold on Frank. My brother is completely under his control, and this man is leading him from bad to worse.

"Oh, Harry, I love my brother dearly, and I tremble for him. Will you try to learn the secret of this man's power over Frank, and also try to reclaim him?"

"I certainly will if I can," replied the boy.

"And, above all, try to save him from the effects of my father's anger," pleaded the girl. "My father is terrible in his wrath, and I am afraid he could be bitter enough to prosecute even his own son. You will do what you can for Frank?"

"I promise you," simply returned Harry. "But I do not know him."

"You will probably meet him here or at papa's office. If I have any chance to bring you together, I will do so."

Then she gave him the package required by her father, and when she said good-by to him, put her hand in Harry's with an impulsive movement that brought the color to the boy's face.

"I hope you will call whenever you feel like doing so," she said, and then Harry bowed himself out, and walked away, in a state of feeling which he could not describe, even to himself.

"How exceedingly pretty she is," he thought, as he strode along with a light step.

CHAPTER VI.

HARRY'S SUSPICIONS.

Down to the real estate office went Harry Hale, and there met Mr. Herbert, to whom he handed over the package given him by Gussie.

The other members of the firm were there, and Harry was introduced to them by Mr. Herbert in highly complimentary terms.

They patted him approvingly on the back, and told him they were glad to have such a brave, energetic boy in their service.

Harry was still blushing from the compliments they paid him, when Mr. Herbert called in the two clerks, Charlie Dayton and Percy Ray, young men, some years older than our hero, and introduced the plucky boy to them.

Baggs, the porter, came last, and having been formally presented to his fellow-workers, the general utility clerk was at once set to work at one branch of his business, which was to learn how to fill in the blank forms of "deposit" receipts.

Then he was given a bunch of keys, and sent with a gentleman and lady who wished to look at a handsome flat.

Harry showed them through the rooms, and being a smart, brainy boy, quick to grasp the details of his occupation, told them in a few words the advantages of the flat, dwelt somewhat on the fact that the front windows faced the west, and would always provide them with a breeze in fair weather, and, in short, made them so charmed with the apartments that they paid him a month's rent on the spot, and went away to engage a moving van.

Quite elated with his success, and feeling some pardonable pride, Harry marched briskly to the office.

"Well?" inquiringly said Mr. Herbert.

"There's a month's rent, sir," returned Harry, laying the money down.

Mr. Herbert laughed loudly.

"Why, Dayton and Ray, and even my partners, have been trying to rent that flat for the past two months," he said. "How did you do it?"

"Merely pointing out the various advantages of the place."

"It never seemed to have any before," smiled his employer.

"Now, go to Mr. Strong, and he will show you how to make out a lease."

So some three or four days passed by, the boy rapidly acquiring the details of the different branches, and winning constant approval from his employers.

His mother seemed resigned, and that was a great relief to Harry, who had feared that she might pine and sicken under her afflictions.

He had been nearly a week at work, and was just returning from an errand uptown, when not more than half a block from the office he came upon two boys clad in the well-known uniform of the American District Telegraph Company.

One had just struck the other as Harry came up, and, as the day's work was done, and he only had to report to the office, he halted for a moment out of mere curiosity.

"What are yer hittin' me fur?" demanded the boy who got the blow, squaring off.

"Ter make yer give up," replied the other, in a rage.

"Give up what?"

"Half o' ther money."

"What money?"

"Ther money yer got from ther man what give yer dat telegram."

"Why, ain't it all mine?"

"No, 'tain't, and yer know it. Was the biz reg'lar?"

"Why wasn't it?"

"'Cause it wasn't, an' yer know it. He comes up to yer and tells yer to put ther telegram in yer book, an' deliver it, and he'll give yer half a dollar. An' yer does it, an' he forks over the half, an' I say yer ought to divide with me."

"Suppose I don't?"

"Then I tells the manager."

"Oh, well, what's the use o' kickin' about twenty-five cents."

"You give up, an' then there won't be any kick; see?"

"All right," grumbled the other; and then the two messengers walked away, still keeping up their quarrel.

"They've been doing something contrary to the rules of the company," thought Harry, as he passed on, "and like other dishonest persons, they are quarreling about the spoils."

Just then he reached the door of the office, and was almost knocked down by the porter, Baggs, who, satchel in hand, was just coming out.

A strong friendship had sprung up between Harry and the porter, and although the latter was evidently in a great hurry, he came to a moment's halt and extended his hand to the boy.

"Good-by, Harry," he said. "Be back again in a day or two. Just time to catch a train to Albany, where—here, this tells the story."

And thrusting an envelope into Harry's hand, he darted away.

Harry opened the envelope, and found that it contained a telegram.

It was an ordinary communication, printed on the familiar yellow blanks of the telegraph company.

It was from Albany, addressed to John Baggs, in care of Herbert, Wainwright & Strong, and was signed Peter Baggs.

The message contained these words:

"Come home first train, and see mother before she dies."

There was nothing so very unusual about this deathbed summons, and yet Harry continued to gaze thoughtfully at the telegram.

He was, as the reader knows, a thinker and an observer.

For a couple of minutes he stood there in deep thought, and then walked into the office.

"Ray," he said to that clerk, "Baggs got a telegram a little while ago, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"How long ago?"

"About fifteen minutes."

"Who took it from the messenger boy?"

"Baggs himself, who happened to be standing near at hand."

"Did he sign the receipt book?"

"Yes," returned Ray; "I know he did, because he borrowed my pencil to do it with."

"Did the messenger boy have a piece of white plaster on the bridge of his nose?"

"Yes, he did."

"Thanks. Is Mr. Herbert in the private office?"

"Yes; just finishing up. We'll close in half an hour."

"Ray, will you please ask Mr. Herbert not to go away until I return? I'll be back in about fifteen minutes."

"What's up, Hale?"

"I'll tell you later. Tell Mr. Herbert I'll return in fifteen minutes."

And away darted Harry at a brisk pace.

Straight to the nearest telegraph office he went, and looked sharply around.

Several uniformed boys were there, but he did not see the one he was looking for.

Harry walked to the little window where he saw the telegraph operator standing, and laid down the card of the real estate firm.

"If a telegram should come for us from an out-of-town correspondent, Albany, for instance, would it come through this branch office?" he asked.

"Yes," was the reply. "It would be received on the through wire from Albany, at headquarters, and then telegraphed to us. We then send it out by messenger. This is done because it is the quickest way."

"Well, have you received any telegram within the past hour addressed to a man named Baggs, and in care of our firm?"

"No."

"You are the only operator?"

"Yes."

"And you didn't receive this?"

And Harry showed him the message that had been handed him by the porter when he said good-by.

The operator glanced curiously at the piece of yellow paper.

"No, I didn't receive it, nor did any other operator," he said.

"It looks all right to you, I suppose, but I can see that it is a bogus telegram."

"You are sure of that?"

"Certainly. Why, there is no mark of any receiving office on it, and the signatures of the sending and receiving operators, which serve as checks or tracers, are unknown to me, and I know all the local telegraphers. It is a bogus telegram, beyond doubt."

Harry's eyes snapped triumphantly.

"I supposed as much," he muttered, to himself, regarding the bogus message with some excitement. "This false summons,

which removes Baggs, is the first step in an intended crime, which I can faintly surmise, and which, single-handed, I shall try to prevent!"

CHAPTER VII.

A MIDNIGHT WATCH.

Our hero turned to the telegraph operator.

"Have you got a messenger here with a piece of white plaster stuck on his nose?" he asked.

"Yes; there he comes now."

Harry turned around, and saw the lad in question entering the door.

He hastily thanked the operator for his courtesy, and walked up to the messenger boy.

"Come outside with me a minute," he said. "I want to talk with you."

The boy followed him.

"What do yer want?" he asked.

"Who gave you the telegram you delivered half an hour ago at the office of Herbert, Wainwright & Strong?"

"I didn't."

"You didn't deliver any?"

"Naw!" insolently.

"Now, look here," resolutely said Harry, "I can bring two clerks here from the office who can identify you, so there is no use trying to lie out of it, and for that matter, Baggs signed his name in your book, and the marks can be seen even if you have rubbed them out."

By the way the boy changed color Harry could see that this random shot had hit the mark.

"Now, young fellow," he went on, "I don't want to get you into trouble, but if you don't answer my questions I'll tell the manager about the half dollar you earned against orders."

The messenger boy was now thoroughly scared, and came to terms at once.

"I ain't done nothin' to you!" he whined, in a sniveling tone.

"And I don't want to do anything to you, unless you compel me to. Who gave you the telegram?"

"He was a stranger to me."

"Describe him."

"He was a swell-dressed young man, with a long mustache."

"Tall or short, thick or thin?"

"Well, about the size o' you."

"And what did he say?"

"Why, he stopped me an' he sez: 'I'll give yer a half dollar to deliver a telegram right near here,' he sez, an' I sez all right, an' then he up an' gives me the telegram, all sealed, an' tells me to deliver it, jest like I allus does, an' git me book signed, an' come back, an' I does it, an' he gives me the half an' sneaks."

"And that's all you know about him?"

"Yes."

Satisfied that he could learn no more of the rather dishonest messenger boy, Harry Hale made his way back with rapid strides to the office of the firm.

He knocked at the door of Mr. Herbert's private office, and was told to enter.

"Mr. Herbert," said Harry, "didn't Baggs sleep here at night?"

"Yes," assented Mr. Herbert.

"Well, I suppose you know that he was called away in haste?"

"Yes, I told him to go."

"Then who will stay here to-night?"

"Nobody. Baggs was summoned away so near to closing-up time that I had no chance to get somebody in his place, so I shall

merely notify the policeman on the beat to keep an extra good watch on the premises."

"Is there much of value in the safe?" respectfully but firmly asked Harry, and added: "Excuse my seeming impertinence, sir, but I have an object in asking."

"Well, Harry, there's not much in the big safe outside, but in my small, private safe here, I have several thousand dollars, which I have been holding in order to make a certain cash payment in a real estate deal that I am negotiating."

"And the money has been there how long?"

"A week."

"Who knows about it?"

"Nobody."

"Absolutely nobody, Mr. Herbert?"

"I am sure of that. Why are you asking these questions, my boy?"

"Mr. Herbert, I beg that you will not press me for my reasons, but I assure you that they are good ones, and that to-morrow I will make them known to you."

"All right, Harry."

"And now I want you to permit me to take Baggs' place for to-night."

"Sleep here?"

"Yes."

"It's very lonely."

"You can leave me some book work to do."

"Shall I get one of the clerks to stay with you?"

"I prefer to be alone."

"All right, Harry, you shall do as you please in the matter. But how about your evening meal?"

"I'll go home, get it, tell my mother what I'm going to do, and then return. Just lock up the place as usual, and leave it alone. Then, if you will give the keys to the side doors, I will admit myself that way in the course of an hour or so."

"All right; here are the keys," said Mr. Herbert. "By the way, Harry, here is the only weapon Baggs keeps in the place—this unusually heavy walking-stick, which contains a sword."

"I've seen it, sir," said Harry.

A few moments later, Mr. Herbert, Harry Hale and Percy Ray, the only persons left in the office, walked out by the regular doorway, which Mr. Herbert securely locked, and then the three walked away.

Harry was extremely thoughtful while eating his evening meal, so much so, indeed, that his mother asked him what was on his mind.

"Business," he replied, but he did not tell her the nature of the business which occupied his thoughts. If he had done so, the fond mother would not have permitted him to act as watchman for his employers that night.

It was after eight o'clock when he reached the vicinity of the office again, and then he exercised great secrecy in admitting himself by means of the hall door, taking advantage of the cover afforded by a big gang of street cleaners who marched past in a solid body, carrying their shovels and brooms.

Screened by these latter, he quickly effected an entrance, and could be reasonably sure that it was made unseen.

A moment later he passed through the door leading from the hall to the office.

He halted there an instant, and gazed out through the plate-glass windows to the street.

The usual Broadway crowd was hurrying past, but nobody was looking in, so with a quick step Harry passed across the room to Mr. Herbert's private office.

There was a small gas jet burning at the desk, the light thrown

down by a green-lined shade, and here Harry sat down and began to read an evening paper.

It took him two hours or more to read the paper through.

Then he took up a pen, and began work on a book which Mr. Herbert had placed on the desk.

Occupied with this work, two hours more passed by. Then came a startling interruption!

Twelve o'clock had long since tolled from a neighboring church tower.

The busy street had quieted down.

The noise made by the policeman on the beat trying the front door came to his ears.

For the next few minutes, the stillness was just as complete as it ever is in a great city. Then Harry heard the front hall door open and close, and steps coming along the uncarpeted floor.

They halted outside the door that afforded communication between the hall and the office. The murmur of voices came indistinctly to his ears, but he could not hear the words.

Soon he heard the sounds made by several gentle blows, and then that indescribable succession of sounds which accompany an effort to pry open a locked door.

It creaked and groaned, resisted for some time, and then, with a metallic snap, gave way, and swung gently inward.

Harry Hale caught the momentary gleam from the reflector of a bull's-eye lantern.

"Turn the slide, you fool!" growled a voice, and the light was hastily obscured.

"Shall we go in?" asked another voice.

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because there's a fair light in the place, and we might be seen from the street."

"True."

"How long does it take that policeman to patrol his beat and get back here?"

"I don't know, but they don't have large beats in this section of the city."

"That's so. Well, how long do you think it is since he passed?"

"I couldn't tell. I'm too excited to notice such a matter as that."

"Oh, are you? Well, don't get excited to such a degree as to make a mull of this business!"

The other grumbled some low-toned reply, which did not come audibly to Harry's ears.

The latter was sitting perfectly still, listening intently.

When he had heard the front door of the hall open and close, he had said to himself:

"It is one of the clerks."

When he heard the voices outside the door that had later on been forced in, Harry muttered:

"It is two of the clerks, who have decided to rob their employers."

He was, therefore, much surprised when he could hear the voices of the two speakers in clear tones, for they were strange to his ears, and Harry had fully made up his mind that the place was to be robbed by people he knew.

"What are you going to do?" asked the one who had mumbled an unintelligible response.

"I'm going to wait until the policeman passes the door again. Is that the door to the private office we want?"

"Yes, the one that's open."

"How about the other partners? Haven't they got safes?"

"No."

"And there's nothing of especial value in that big safe?"

"Principally books."

"Which are of no value to us. How much is in the little safe, do you suppose?"

"It can't be less than five thousand, and it may be pretty close to ten."

"You warm my heart. Say!"

"Well?"

"We'll cut a dash in Paris."

"Oh, I've been crazy to see Paris for a long time."

"Well, you'll soon have the opportunity to gratify your longing. Here comes the cop."

The heavy, measured tread of the policeman was heard as he swung past on his rounds, and a moment later Harry heard the speaker say:

"Now."

And then the two burglars came softly across the floor.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I WILL NOT ROB MY FATHER!"

How Harry's nerves did tingle!

How many burglars were coming?

Were there only the two whose voices he had heard, or were there others standing silently on guard in the hall?

Many or few, this sixteen-year-old boy prepared to meet them, and defeat their criminal purpose.

Mr. Herbert's office was a good-sized room, and contained, among other things, a tall screen of Japanese manufacture, which served to hide a marble wash-basin, towels, comb and brush.

This screen was at one end of the room.

The safe was at the other end.

The door was just about halfway between the two.

Quickly and quietly, Harry moved from the chair he had occupied and slipped behind the tall screen.

Was he excited?

What boy of sixteen wouldn't be, under such circumstances?

His heart beat against his ribs with such painful intensity that he almost cried out with pain, and for one brief instant it was as much as he could do to draw in a full breath.

But he was not afraid.

He was a brave boy, endowed with quiet, confident courage, not boastful or assertive, but the kind that is sometimes spoken of as being "clear grit all the way through."

So now he stood leaning against the marble basin, holding in his hand the sword-cane Mr. Herbert had pointed out to him.

Into the room came the burglars.

The screen was of the kind provided with several spaces for the insertion of ribbons, and through these openings Harry was enabled to obtain an unobstructed view of his visitors as they entered the private office.

He had expected, naturally enough, to see two men walk in, but instead he saw a man and a boy.

The latter was evidently about his own age, perhaps a year older, Harry thought, and while his pale, dissipated countenance was expressive of an easy-going disposition, it could not be said that he had an evil face.

The man appeared to be a person of middle age, and when Harry glanced at him he could see that he was a villain.

They were both well dressed, and nothing in their personal exterior suggested the idea of burglary.

However, the object of their visit could not be doubted after what had been said.

Harry watched and listened.

The man put the lantern down upon the desk, and slowly turned the slide.

"That gaslight is not bright enough to show us the dial," he said. "I'll direct the light full upon it, and then you can do the work."

"All right," said the boy, and opening his coat, he drew forth an ordinary visiting card from his vest pocket.

"It would be a sweet thing now if you had made a mistake," growled the man.

"In copying this?" asked the boy.

"Yes."

"I took it from his little pocket diary, where he always kept it, and it is made out in his usual style. He can't remember the combination, and always puts it down in his diary. Being mere figures, they would not attract attention."

"Well, go ahead."

The boy took a mat from the floor, placed it in front of the safe, and knelt upon it. The man stood beside him, directing the full glare of the lantern upon the polished dial of the safe.

"Ten, and then four turns to the left, and then twenty," muttered the boy.

Click! click! came to Harry's ears, and he knew that the combination of the little private safe was being operated.

He clutched the head of the sword-cane firmly with his right hand, and held the lower part with his left hand.

Then he softly moved one foot toward the edge of the screen, intending to creep out.

At that moment the man spoke:

"It's working elegantly. Now, three times to the left, and forty. Why, it's a multiplication of the number ten, that's all. Why, what in thunder are you doing?"

For an instant the kneeling boy sent the dial whirling around and around, thus destroying the progress he had made toward unlocking the safe.

"Are you insane?" cried the man.

"No; I'm sane," returned the youth, getting on his feet. "I have been insane, but now I have come to my senses."

And as he uttered the words, he put in his vest pocket the card upon which the combination had been marked, and buttoned his coat over it.

For a moment the man seemed speechless with astonishment, and only glared at his youthful companion. Intensely interested at this turn of affairs, Harry drew back his foot and watched the pair keenly through the openings of the Japanese screen.

At last the man found his voice.

"What does this mean?" he snarled.

"It means that my eyes are opened!" replied the boy, passionately. "I have been blind, and you, with your sweet tongue, have made me so. You have raked and torn at my wounds—the wounds of my pride. You have made me believe that I was brow-beaten, insulted, abused, treated like a dog, and in every way wrongly used. You have flattered and wheedled, and threatened and lied, and have made me believe that I was an injured hero, and you have brought me to contemplate a crime like this without a single twinge of conscience, but it has all come to me like a flash, Harlington Mace, and I tell you I go no farther!"

"Why, you talk like a preacher," sneered the man, regarding him with eyes that blazed with malignant anger. "To hear you utter those highly moral sentences would give anybody the impression that you never had, and never could, commit a crime!"

The boy winced visibly under these final words, which seemed to cut him like a knife.

"Never mind what I have done, or what I may do," he said, stoutly. "I tell you that I now realize what an unnatural and

horrible deed I was about to commit, and I tell you that I will not rob my father!"

Ah! the secret was out now!

This, then, was Gussie Herbert's brother, in whose behalf the pretty blonde girl had spoken so pleadingly to Harry.

"Try to save him from the effects of my father's anger," she had said to Harry, and the latter had promised to do what he could.

"So you will not rob papa, eh?" sneered Mace, with a chuckle.

"Well, Frank, I don't see that it's necessary."

"What do you mean?"

"That I'll do it myself, and save you from committing the crime. Of course, I shall require that card which you have placed in your vest pocket, so just hand it over, and be lively about it."

"I will not," said Frank.

"You'll get hurt."

"I'm not as old as you, but I'm big enough to fight you, and I'll do it."

"And you know something about boxing, too, don't you?"

"Enough to whip you," confidently replied Frank Herbert, and Harry saw him clench his fists.

"But not enough to whip this!" snapped Harlington Mace, suddenly drawing a long, slender knife of the stiletto pattern from his vest and raising it in the air in a menacing manner. "Frank Herbert, I want that card, and I'm going to have it! Put it down on that desk, and be lively about it, or I'll stick this between your ribs, and then take the card, anyhow!"

"Would you murder me?" gasped the boy, in amazement.

"Yes, and for less than you say there must be in that safe," returned the villain. "Out with the card, you sneaking hypocrite, or into you goes the knife!"

But at that instant our hero leaped from behind the Japanese screen, and with one long, cat-like bound, had his broad back against the door.

He had drawn the sword from the cane, and now extended the long, flashing blade toward the startled rascal.

"Suppose you try that knife on me?" quietly exclaimed Harry Hale.

Words cannot express the surprise and fright created by Harry's sudden appearance.

Deeming themselves absolutely alone, the startled pair were rendered speechless and motionless by the advent of our hero.

Frank Herbert, seized with one of the commonest effects of sudden fright, felt his legs giving way under him, and half fell into an armchair that stood near at hand.

Harlington Mace, older, hardened, was the first to recover his wits.

He glared ferociously at Harry, as though seeking to intimidate by mere glances, but the lad regarded him coolly.

"Who are you?" he snarled.

"An employee, defending the property of my employer from a thief!" answered Harry.

"Do you want to live to see the sunshine in the morning?"

"I should like to, and I confidently expect to see it."

"Then throw up your hands!" fiercely growled Harlington Mace, moving one hand quickly to a hip pocket, "or I'll put a bullet into you!"

Harry laughed at him.

"Don't waste your breath, Mr. Mace," he said. "I know very well that if you possessed a pistol you would have drawn it first and spoken after."

The baffled villain regarded the sharp boy with a baleful glance.

"I'm going through that door," he hissed, and raised on high the

weapon with which he had threatened Frank Herbert. "Will you stand aside and let me pass?"

"No!" answered Harry Hale.

"Then down you go!" gritted Mace, and dashed, impetuously, forward.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. HERBERT'S SON.

Harry Hale was in a position calling for both nerve and address.

He possessed both.

At boarding school he stood second to the fencing master only in the expert use of the foil, and now, as Harlington Mace rushed fiercely at him, the lad threw himself into the easy position of an accomplished swordsman on guard.

With a growl like that of an enraged brute, Mace struck at him with the long, slender weapon, no doubt expecting to easily beat down the boy's guard.

Harry, however, had a wrist of steel, and met the attack with such a firm, sure guard that the knife was deflected from its aim.

Then, with a dexterous twist, made with inconceivable quickness, he made the slender blade of the sword twine about the knife, tore it from Mace's grasp, and sent it flying across the room.

Then, as it fell with a musical clang to the floor of the office, Harry presented the point of his weapon until it fairly touched Mace's chest, and sternly said:

"Surrender!"

One glance, made up of rebellion, surprise and fear, Harlington Mace gave the clever boy who had thus disarmed him and placed him at his opponent's mercy, and then he said:

"Curse me if I don't think you're game to stick me with that!"

"Life is sweet, and I think you hold mine very cheaply," said Harry. "If you make one hostile movement, I shall feel justified in running you through."

"Then I give in," philosophically returned Harlington Mace.

There was a chair right at hand, and Harry gave it a little push with his foot.

"Sit down!" he ordered.

Mace obeyed.

"Fold your arms!"

The order was complied with.

"Now," said Harry, looking him squarely in the eyes, "please remember that I have a weapon in my hand that I know how to use, that I look upon you with no more concern than would be due a snarling dog, and that I am ready to run you through at the very first sign of an attempt to escape."

Harlington Mace had by this time recovered his nerve and his coolness.

"Don't fret about me," he said. "Just answer me a few questions, and then we'll get along more smoothly."

"What do you want to know?"

"Who are you?"

"My name is Hale, and I am one of the clerks employed here."

"Did you just happen to be here?"

"No; I spotted your game, Harlington Mace, and was waiting to receive you!"

The rascal was almost speechless with surprise, but managed to gasp out:

"What game?"

"The one that decoyed Baggs away with a bogus telegram, just

a few minutes before closing-up time. That's all I shall tell you now. The rest will come out on your trial for burglary!"

The villain snarled:

"My trial, eh?"

"Certainly!"

"I suppose his trial will take place at the same time?" and he nodded toward the still trembling Frank Herbert.

This was a poser for Harry.

No matter what the outcome of the case had been, he would have desired to screen and save the brother of pretty Gussie Herbert, as he had promised the pleading girl to do; but now, after having heard the boy speak so penitently, no nobly, he felt it more and more incumbent on him to save the misguided young man.

Frank Herbert was completely overcome with his sensations of fear and remorse, and now, as Harry Hale glanced rather pityingly at him, the foolish fellow covered his face with his hands and burst into tears.

"He's very tender-hearted," sneeringly remarked Harlington Mace. "Do you know who he is?"

"Yes."

"You know that he is Mr. Herbert's son?"

"Yes."

"Well, what are you going to do with him?"

"I have not yet decided."

"Well, I'll decide one point for you before you go any further," insolently said the sneering villain. "He's equally guilty with me in this little game, as far as it has gone, and if I go to jail, you can just bet your life he goes with me!"

And Harry Hale knew that the rascal was in a position to make good his threat, thus dragging down Gussie's brother with him.

The young conqueror rapidly thought over the situation.

No real harm had been done.

Not a dollar had been stolen, and he had, by his own intelligence and courage, prevented robbery, and perhaps worse.

Frank Herbert, still crying heartily, was in a penitent, remorseful mood, a condition favorable for missionary work.

Harry felt that he was justified, under the circumstances, in acting upon his own judgment, and having made up his mind to do so, he proceeded to carry out his ideas.

He removed his broad back from the door, and flung the barrier wide open.

"Go!" he said.

Mace stood up.

"Do you mean it?" he cried.

"Yes."

"Of course, my friend goes with me?"

"Of course, he does not."

"Then I don't go. I'm not going to desert my pal."

"No harm will come to him."

"I tell you I don't go without him."

"And I tell you that if you don't go at once, I will summon the police by pressing this little button."

"Then Frank and I would both be nabbed."

"True!" assented Harry Hale, "but that would be your fault, and not mine. I can read you, Harlington Mace, deep as you deem yourself. You fear to leave your dupe, your tool, your victim, here to be questioned by me, but that is just exactly what you'll have to do. Otherwise, I shall rid myself of all responsibility in this matter by turning you both over to the police."

Baffled in his attempt to fool this clear-sighted boy, Harlington Mace turned around to the sobbing Frank:

"Say, you sniveling fool—"

He had gone just so far, when Harry Hale broke in upon him.

"Say one more word to him, and I'll slash you on your cheeks, and mark you for life!" he cried, stamping his foot impatiently, and elevating his sword-cane.

He divined at once that Mace intended to utter threats designed to keep Frank's mouth closed, and Harry was resolved that the young man should not be intimidated.

"Clear out!" he shouted, his temper rising and his eyes sparkling. "Get out, you villain, or I'll save the hangman a job."

He looked so threatening, and the sharp point of the sword was so near Mace's face, that the latter took fright, and rushed away without another word.

Harry stood motionless until he heard the outer door close, and then he placed the sword-cane on a desk, advanced toward Frank Herbert, and placed his hand upon the latter's shoulder.

"Look up!" he said. "Dry your eyes and talk to me."

Frank had really "had his cry out," and now he dried his reddened eyes and looked up at his father's clerk.

He put out his hand impulsively, and Harry Hale clutched it with a warm, firm grasp.

"Oh, how good your hand seems to me!" the weak young man cried. "It seems so strong, so firm, so reliant, so honest. Oh! let me hold it, for it makes me feel as though it could lead me back to the honest paths I once trod."

And his eyes were again dim as he looked up into Harry's face. Touched to the very heart by this child-like burst of confidence, Harry Hale could not keep the tears back from his own eyes, as he gently said:

"Hold on to it, Frank, now and as long as you will, and believe that I would rejoice to rescue you from vice and dissipation, and make you worthy of your father and your sister."

At the mention of his father's name, the young man shuddered.

"My father hates me," he said.

"And you fear him?"

"I think he could send me to prison if he knew of this affair."

"I really think that you do not understand one another," said Harry, "and I must try to bring about a better state of affairs between you. Now, listen:

"Your sister has spoken to me about you, telling me her fears and the sorrow you cause by your conduct.

"She has asked me to save you from the certain effects of the life you are leading, and I have promised her that I will try to do so.

"What I have seen and heard here to-night is enough to assure me that there is much more good than bad in you, and something tells me that I can reform you, can save you, can restore you as a worthy son and brother to your father and sister, if you will only help me to do so.

"Frank Herbert, trust to the impulse which makes you cling to my hand, the hand of an upright and honest boy, and tell me the nature of the hold Harlington Mace has upon you!"

Frank looked trustfully at him, and had just opened his mouth to speak, when there came a startling interruption.

The front door of the hallway opened and closed, and the hasty tread of feet could be heard advancing toward the rear office door. Tearing himself free from the clinging grasp of Frank Herbert, Harry leaped lightly across the room, seized the sword-cane from the desk, and threw himself in a position of defense. Just as he did so, the rear door of the office was thrown violently open!

CHAPTER X.

FRANK HERBERT'S STORY.

It had vaguely flitted through Harry's brain that Harlington Mace, with a companion or two at his back, had returned to complete the interrupted burglary, and he now stood with one hand resting against the electric button at the side of the private office door, ready to summon police aid, if necessary.

The instant, however, that the gaslight fell on the forms in the open doorway, every sentiment except surprise vanished.

Mr. Herbert stood there, and at his side was Baggs, the janitor. They were revealed by the gaslight.

Harry stood somewhat in the shadow.

He hastily thrust the sword into the cane, laid it quietly on the table, and strode out from the private office.

"Here I am, Mr. Herbert," he said, and then turning to the janitor, he added: "You have come to relieve me, have you?"

Now, Harry said all this in the most natural manner possible, but he was, nevertheless, keeping up a great deal of thinking, for with Frank Herbert in the private office, our hero was now surrounded by a peculiar and very trying state of affairs.

He wanted to screen Frank.

To do this, he must, doubtless, conceal the fact that a burglary had been attempted, in which contemplated crime his employer's son had been an accomplice.

And, above all, he wanted to be upright and honest, and to tell the truth.

He made up his mind to be guided by circumstances, and to trust to his quick wits to save Frank Herbert from his father's anger.

The latter was regarding him keenly.

"Are you not surprised to see me?" he asked.

"A little," admitted Harry. "I am much more surprised to see Baggs, supposing that he was on his way to Albany."

"Three hours away from the city, at a railroad refreshment-room, Baggs met his brother, Peter, from whom he supposed he had received a telegram, learned that no telegram had been sent, and that his mother was well in health, and at once returned to the city, and came direct to my house. I suspected that something—why, Harry, who is sitting in my office?"

And he peered sharply through the open doorway.

"Your son, Frank," replied Harry.

"My son?"

"Yes, sir."

"What's he doing here?"

"You don't object to him being here to keep me company, do you, Mr. Herbert?" evasively rejoined Harry.

Mr. Herbert shot a keen glance at his clerk.

"Is he here by your invitation?" he asked.

Still seeking to shield the erring but repentant youth, Harry Hale felt sorely tempted to reply in the affirmative, but at that very instant he heard the echo of his noble mother's advice: "Be truthful! Tell the truth at all times, when it is demanded of you, and screen neither yourself nor others by falsehood. Do this, and you need fear no accusation; do this, and you may look all men in the face."

And Harry Hale held up his head, looked his employer in the eye, and truthfully answered:

"No, sir; he is not."

"I thought as much. Now, Harry, tell me how he got in here?"

"By the hall door."

"And what does he want here?"

"Mr. Herbert," resolutely said Harry, "I could answer that question, but for the present I beg that you will excuse me. If

Baggs intends to remain here, I would like to go home with you and your son."

"Very well," assented Mr. Herbert, "and perhaps either you or Frank will explain how this came about."

And he pointed significantly to the evidences that the rear door had been forced open.

"That shall be explained," said Harry. "Are you ready, sir?"

"Yes," assented Mr. Herbert, "as everything seems to be all right here."

"Everything is all right," responded Harry. "Come, Frank."

Very humbly, indeed, Frank came from the inner office, and followed his father and Harry out to the street.

"Now, Mr. Herbert," requested Harry, "you will oblige me greatly if you will walk ahead, as I wish to have a private conversation with Frank as we go along."

His employer gravely nodded his head, and walked briskly on in advance.

Harry took Frank's arm.

"Now, Frank," he said, "if you really want to turn over a new leaf, and you want me to help you to do it, your chance is at hand."

"You will help me?" eagerly asked Frank.

"Heartily."

"You will stand between me and the old man?"

"I will stand between you and your father, if that is what you mean."

"Excuse me. Yes, that is what I mean. Now, what must I do?"

"You must tell me the nature of the hold Mace has upon you!"

Frank started.

"I cannot."

"You must," said Harry. "The only way for me to save you is by knowing the truth. You are in this man's power, are you not?"

"Yes," reluctantly.

"Are you heavily in debt to him, or does he know some secret which you fear he can use against you?"

"Oh, it's not a matter of money."

"Then it's the other. Now, Frank, what does he know about you?"

One moment of hesitation, and then the wretched youth blurted it out:

"He knows I committed a crime!"

"What was the crime?"

"Forgery!"

The answer came in a whisper.

This was serious enough, if true, and that it was true could hardly be doubted.

"Well, Frank," said Harry, "as you have told me so much, you may as well tell me all. Tell me all about the forgery, and this man's connection with the crime."

"I will," said Frank. "Something over a year ago, I made the acquaintance of Harlington Mace. He was stopping at the best hotel in the town where I was attending boarding-school, and struck up a very warm friendship with me.

"He pretended to have a great liking for me, represented himself to be a man of means, and in the most friendly way begged me to call on him for money if I should ever run short.

"I was wild, I admit, a great spendthrift, and very dissipated. He was a very jolly companion, and completely won my heart.

"After a time, he went away to New York, but soon wrote to me, and kept up a friendly exchange of letters.

"Just exactly what this villain had counted upon soon came to pass.

"I gambled heavily, and lost more money than I had or could borrow, and was threatened with exposure to the authorities of the school.

"If I did not pay up by a certain date, the whole school would know of the matter, and I would be expelled in disgrace.

"I must confess to you that I had been in the same fix twice before, and all within a year, or less. The first time it happened, I sent a begging letter to Gussie to help me out of the scrape, and the dear girl sold some of her jewelry, nearly all, in fact, and sent me the necessary money.

"Three months later, when I got into the same kind of a scrape, I applied to her again for help, and she wrote me that father had discovered the absence of the jewelry, had questioned her about it, and she had told him the cause of its disappearance. He had forbidden her to help me again, and had instructed her to inform him when I again asked for help, and that he would help me.

"So he did," with a shiver. "He came up to the school, gave me the money, lectured me until I wished the earth would open and swallow me, and then promised me that if he found me out in any more disgraceful transactions, he would commit me to a reformatory, put me on a schoolship, or adopt some such measure of restraint.

"The ordinary faults of youth did not excite his hostility, but for some reason, that was rather a mystery to me, he seemed aroused to a bitter condition of feeling by gambling.

"Well, in the course of time came my third fall from grace, when, as I have told you, I was threatened with exposure and disgrace.

"I dare not appeal to my father, and I knew that my sister, good, truthful girl that she is, would not disobey orders, and yet I had to have money.

"In this dilemma, which I knew later was plainly foreseen by Harlington Mace, I very naturally turned to the supposed wealthy and generous friend who had urged me to make him my banker when short of funds.

"I wrote to him, telling him that I had to have a hundred dollars by the seventeenth day of the month, and on the sixteenth day of the month, when I was shivering with apprehension at his delay, I received a letter from him, written in the warmest terms of friendship. I can close my eyes and see the lines now:

"DEAR FRANK: So sorry that I was absent the day your letter arrived. I could almost cry to think that perhaps you have worried yourself about this trifling matter, which, no doubt, was on your mind for days past. I have instructed my secretary to fill in a check to your order while I am writing these lines, in order not to miss the mail which will get the money to you on time, and in two minutes it will be in the mail box. Don't be afraid to ask for more if you want it, you dear, foolish boy."

"And," continued Frank, "within the letter lay the check for one hundred dollars, made out to my order, but owing to his friendly haste, I foolishly thought, unsigned!"

"And you—" breathlessly cried Harry.

"I had to have the money," desperately rejoined Frank Herbert. "It looked like an oversight; his signature was familiar to me; I could imitate his handwriting; the landlord at the hotel had often cashed his checks in my presence, and in the excitement and pressure of the circumstances, I forged Mace's name to that check!"

CHAPTER XI.

REUNITED.

Harry Hale had demanded to know the true reason of Mace's sway over Frank Herbert, and now that the secret was out, it made him gasp for breath.

"Forgery!" he whispered.

"Yes, forgery," returned Frank, in almost as low a tone, and cast an apprehensive glance at his father, trudging silently along some thirty or forty feet in advance. "Do you think my father, who never did a dishonorable deed in his life, is likely to forgive me for such a crime!"

"Don't worry about that now," evasively said Harry. "Just go on and tell me what took place later on."

"Oh, the landlord of the hotel cashed the check for me, hardly glancing at the forged signature, and the fatal paper passed out of my hands. In my blind folly, thinking Mace my dearest friend, I hardly felt any alarm, deluding myself with the idea that I should be able to repossess myself of the check in the event of the forgery being discovered, and feeling very nearly sure that the deception would remain unknown."

"Ah, I needed but to have one meeting with my supposed friend to know that I had been made his dupe! Arrest and imprisonment stared me in the face, and I found that I had become Mace's slave, bought by his check for one hundred dollars. Constantly threatened, I had to do whatever Mace said, and from mere dissipated companionship, by degrees I arrived at the stage to which he had expected to lead and drive me—to where I could assist him to plunder my father. This last part you've seen, and you know that I halted in the act at the twelfth hour."

"And this is all?" asked Harry.

"All."

"And how do you feel about the condition of affairs now?"

"Well, I feel this way: I am determined to get away from Harlington Mace, and lead a different life. Now you are going to make an effort to bring my father and me together, and I think you will fail. In that event, I shall pack up a few things in a valise, and take an early train away."

"Where to?"

"Anywhere; the farther the better. I mean to get away from Harlington Mace, and try to lead a new life."

Harry said no more, for he was thinking very deeply, and in silence the three arrived soon after at Mr. Herbert's residence.

Into a snug library, the gentleman of the house ushered the two lads, placed chairs for them, and then seated himself.

"Well?" he said, inquiringly, and glanced at Harry Hale, but the latter's glance was fastened upon an oil portrait on the wall opposite, a portrait of a little boy of ten, with a face that he at once recognized.

"That was Frank as a little boy?" he said.

"Yes," assented Mr. Herbert.

Harry made a bold plunge.

"At that age, you kissed him when he went to bed at night, and a warm affection existed between you," he asserted.

Mr. Herbert started with surprise, and perhaps with a little resentment, too, but, instinctively, his eyes sought the face of the portrait, his features softened as tender memories came over him, and in a moment, irrepressible tears stood trembling upon his cheeks.

Clever Harry Hale seized his advantage.

"He was a good boy then, sir," he said; "for he was protected by your love. But when he was sent away to boarding-school he lost that good influence and became wild. His boyish misdeeds were severely condemned by you; you were stern and hard with

him; his mother was dead, and you were his best friend, but he feared you, and as a result of his fear he became the victim of a bad man. Deprived of your indulgent affection, your boy became reckless."

"I was, perhaps, too hard with him," faintly admitted his father, huskily. "I used to love him dearly, and it made me feel bitter to think that he might bring disgrace on my honored name. But I will admit that I was too severe."

"Now, sir, listen attentively while I tell you all that he has done," requested Harry, and as briefly as possible he recounted all that Frank had told him in the street.

"Forgery!" gasped Mr. Herbert. "Oh, Frank!"

The penitent youth hid his pale face with his hands, and Harry, scarcely heeding the interruption, went on talking, and recounted to Mr. Herbert the story of the attempted attack upon the safe, and of Frank's awakening conscience.

"Mr. Herbert!" cried Harry, "he declared he would not rob his father, and if I had not been there he might have given up his young life in defense of that card which is still in his pocket, and the possession of which by Harlington Mace would have placed the contents of your safe at the villain's disposal. It seems to me that such a son is worth forgiving and saving!"

The appeal was not in vain.

Mr. Herbert opened his arms.

"Frank, my poor, foolish boy!" he brokenly cried.

"Oh, father, forgive me!" sobbed Frank, and rushed across the room, and into his father's sheltering embrace.

With a lump in his throat which he could not swallow, Harry tiptoed across the room to the door, passed into the hallway, and left the reunited father and son alone.

For ten minutes he paced up and down the hallway in a state of mind that can be much better imagined than described, for very proud, indeed, must the heart feel when one has reunited two members of a family who were drifting apart.

"Come in, Harry."

Mr. Herbert, standing in the open doorway of the library, was calling him.

In went our hero, and Mr. Herbert seized him by the hand.

"You're a noble fellow!" he said, his voice quivering with emotion, "and I could almost rejoice in the misfortune which brought you to me. My son and I were drifting apart, and I can see now that it was as much my fault as his. Engrossed with the cares of business, and forgetting that he was only a boy in years, I have neglected him; yes, and I admit that I judged him by too old and too severe a standpoint of morals. You have shown me that a boy needs indulgent love; that there is a duty to a young son no less than a son's duty to a father. Had I been more lenient and affectionate to my boy he might never have committed the errors which now plunge him in misery. Well, Harry, my brave, brainy, upright and honest boy friend, how are we to get out of our present difficulties?"

"You refer to the possible result from the forgery, do you not, sir?"

"Yes."

"If you could regain possession of that piece of paper, would that end the trouble?"

"Without doubt."

"Then," resolutely rejoined Harry, "it must be my work to obtain possession of that very important document."

"And you will do it?"

"I will try."

Mr. Herbert sighed, hopefully.

"You're a wonderful boy," he said. "Nothing seems to daunt you."

"Well," frankly admitted Harry, "I confess that I rather like difficulties for the pleasure it gives me to overcome them."

He turned to the son.

"Frank," he said, "do you know that the forged check is in existence?"

"Yes, I am sure of it," replied Frank, with a sorrowful nod of his head.

"When did you see it last?"

"Two days ago."

"Where?"

"At Mace's home," was the reply. "He brought it out and used it to help him out when he was wheedling, flattering, coaxing, bullying and threatening me into the scheme to plunder the safe in the private office."

"Don't feel so badly about it, Frank," kindly said Harry, patting the dejected young fellow on the shoulder, "for you committed no crime, and are united to your father. Now tell me where Mace lives."

Frank gave him the address.

"Does he do anything or pretend to do anything for a living?"

"No," returned Frank; "unless you call gambling and swindling doing something for a living."

"But you believe that he is an out-and-out criminal, do you not?"

"Yes, I do."

"Do you know his haunts?"

"Some of them."

"Then we'll hunt him up. Mr. Herbert, I want you to grant me leave of absence from the office for a few days."

"Take all the time you want, my boy," was the hearty rejoinder. "I suppose you have some scheme in your mind."

"Well, hardly that, but I want to be perfectly free to seize upon anything that may turn up."

"I understand you. The whole matter is in your hands, Harry. I look to you to outwit this villain, and to wrest from him the proof of my foolish boy's crime. My hands are tied. I can only adopt my remedy for the evil when your wits fail."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"To purchase the proof of Frank's guilt at any price," groaned the unhappy father.

"Ah!" rejoined Harry, "you may well say at any price, for you can be sure that the villain would bleed you to the very last dollar."

"Well, Harry, there is something mysterious about the absence of blackmailing on Mace's part," said Mr. Herbert, a shade of anxiety in his tone. "Isn't it strange that, with his intimate knowledge of everything and everybody connected with this affair, Harlington Mace didn't try to sell me the forged paper for as much as my private safe was supposed to contain?"

Harry's eyes opened widely.

Mr. Herbert had made a shrewd suggestion, and the more the boy thought over it the more he was convinced that a motive other than that of mere gain lay at the bottom of Mace's well-planned schemes.

But what was that motive?

CHAPTER XII.

GUSSIE'S GRATITUDE.

It was only after a long and earnest conference, and when the bright light of the morning was streaming in through the partly open blinds of the library, that Harry Hale arose to take his departure.

He made an arrangement with Frank Herbert for a meeting, and then departed.

"I know the way out," he said, as the host arose to see him to the door. "Don't leave your new-found son."

And with a bright smile at the reunited ones, he closed the library door.

Along the hall he walked to the front door, and was wondering that it was ajar, when he heard a sweet voice from the doorstep, saying:

"I am here, Harry."

And there, holding the door ajar, and dressed in a most bewitching blue wrapper, stood Gussie Herbert, looking as fair and bright as the morning itself.

She held out her little white hand to him in her impulsive way, and gave his fingers a squeeze that made him blush.

"How good you are," she said. "My room is just above the library, and the furnace pipe in the corner is as good as a telephone. I heard nearly everything, and I can guess the rest. You saved my brother."

"He certainly tried to save himself," modestly said Harry.

"He would have failed without help from you," was the earnest rejoinder. "Frank means well, but he lacks resolution. Harry, do not leave him to himself yet."

"You mean that he needs sustaining."

"Yes."

"I will stand by him."

"Do," thankfully said Gussie. "Do you think you can recover the evidence of his crime?"

"I think I shall find out a way."

"Heaven help you!" fervently rejoined the loving daughter and sister. "You will save a family from ruin and despair. Go, Harry, go to think and plan to save us from this impending disgrace and trouble, and my prayers will go with you."

Thinking deeply, Harry arrived at his humble home, and ate his breakfast in such an abstracted manner that his mother became alarmed. He quieted her fears, asked a few questions, and found out that nothing had been heard from or about his father, and then he left the house.

How was he to regain for Frank Herbert the convincing proof of the latter's crime?

That was the absorbing question. Harry thought over plan after plan.

There was something wrong with each one, and Harry was still cudgeling his brain, when he caught sight of a familiar figure ahead of him on the street.

It was the messenger boy who had delivered the bogus telegram.

He had just come out of a very elegant house, and had halted a few steps away.

In his hands he held a notebook and a short pencil.

He made entries in the notebook with the short pencil, and after writing a line, would stop, look up reflectively, tap his forehead and scratch his head, as people are wont to do when endeavoring to recall, and then would jot down another line or two.

Harry watched him closely, and became intensely interested.

Having completed his entries in the little notebook, the messenger put it away in an inner pocket of his vest, picked up his delivery book, looked at two envelopes it contained, and hurried along.

"Now what in the world can he be jotting down in a private book?" muttered Harry, as he strode after him. "That boy has a sly expression constantly on his face, and I am of the opinion that it might be profitable to watch him."

"How am I to know that the first dealings he ever had with Harlington Mace were when the negotiations for the delivery of the bogus telegram were pending?"

"I can recall now that when I made him talk by means of threats, he had the story very pat on his tongue.

"If this boy knows Mace, he may be of use to me. Anyway, I am going to follow him up for a little time."

A moment later the messenger delivered one of the envelopes at the office of a big jewelry store, and when he came out, passed a short distance away, and drew forth that little notebook once more.

He made his entries in exactly the same manner, tapping his forehead, looking up, scratching his head, reflectively, and going through the usual performance of recalling.

Then, as though unable to satisfactorily bring to mind some half-forgotten matter, he walked on and turned down a side street.

A short distance down, and in a particularly deserted and quiet spot, he seemed to recall what had previously eluded his memory, and paused at once to make an entry in the little book which he had still retained in his hand.

"Now," thought Harry, "I am interested in the contents of that book, and I am going to have a look at it."

And, having made up his mind, Harry Hale acted.

He strode silently up to the unsuspicious messenger, and snatched the little book from his hands.

"Excuse me," he said, "but I want to borrow this for a moment."

"Gimme that!" snorted the messenger, and without more ado, he rushed at Harry, and tried to seize the book.

He was just about as tall as Harry, but not as broad-shouldered. However, he was not lacking in pluck, and made a determined attack upon our hero.

He tried to clutch the notebook, the cause of all the trouble.

Harry held it with his left hand, and placed it behind his back.

As the messenger rushed at him, he merely swung his open hand, the right one, and caught the boy a stinging blow on the cheek.

It staggered the messenger, and it hurt, too, but it did not settle him.

"Oh, you want to fight, do yer?" he cried, and squared off at Harry.

The latter did not want to let go of the book, so, being an accomplished boxer, he waited until the messenger struck at him, and neatly "ducked" the blow, having been taught to use his head as well as his hands.

Then he struck back with his disengaged hand, caught the messenger in the neck, and over went the latter into the gutter.

Then Harry was proceeding to take a glance at the book, when the messenger, who certainly was both gritty and hard-headed, picked himself out of the gutter, and rushed at him again.

"I'm a-fightin' yer still!" he cried.

"Well, I don't want to fight; I want to look at this book," quietly returned Harry, and changed his tactics.

The messenger struck out.

Harry ducked, went under the extended arm of the infuriated boy, wheeled short about, threw his right arm around the messenger's body in such a manner as to pin his two arms closely to his sides, and thus held him.

The messenger struggled madly, cursed in a horrible manner, and made all sorts of threats, but Harry held him with ease, and dexterously opened the book which he had retained in his left hand.

"Lemme go!" roared the messenger.

"Shut up and keep quiet," ordered Harry, "or I'll squeeze the breath out of your body."

And to emphasize the declaration he gave the messenger a hug with that powerful right arm of his that made him grunt.

Then he kept quiet.

Harry looked at the book.

This is what he saw:

"J. & V. K.

"Safe against back office wall; two windows; iron bars; bars look shaky. Back door to yard, with bolt, spring lock, and heavy bar of wood. Shutters outside the windows are wood, and look old."

Under this collection of entries, Harry discovered another one. It read:

"B., S. & C.

"Three windows; strong bars; heavy iron shutters; side door looks flimsy; common lock, and bolt just about a foot above the lock."

Harry paused.

What was he looking at?

What could the entries mean?

It came to him like a flash.

He put the notebook in his pocket, and then let go his hold on the messenger.

Harry turned a stern eye upon him.

"It looks rather suspicious to me," he said, slowly, and making each word a weapon, "to read a description locating a safe and describing the situation of windows, doors, etc., under the initials of 'J. & V. K.,' especially when I recall that the firm of Johnson & Van Kleek, on our block, were robbed by burglars night before last; and when I see the description of the office of 'B., S. & C.,' I recall the attempt to break into the store of Browning, Simpson & Coddington! There is no doubt as to the intent of these entries, and I think I shall give the book to the police!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MESSENGER'S CONFESSION.

The threat struck terror to the guilty heart of the messenger boy.

He paled visibly, and his breath came short and quick.

"The police?" he gasped.

"Certainly," returned Harry Hale. "Here is enough to show me that the descriptions are made for the purpose of burglary. Of course, I don't know anything about such matters, but the police do, and they would soon find out enough to send you to prison for ten years."

And again he fixed a very accusing eye on the messenger.

The latter seemed almost to wilt.

A sort of shiver ran over him, and then the tears began to roll down his not overclean cheeks.

"Don't!" he sniveled.

"Don't what?" asked Harry.

"Don't go to the police."

"Why not?"

"I'm only a boy, and I didn't think I was doing any harm."

"You knew what use was intended when you described the interiors of offices and other places."

The sniveling messenger shifted uneasily on his feet, but said nothing.

"For whom did you do this?"

No answer.

"You'd better speak out."

Only more tears.

"Some people can cry easily," remarked Harry, as he glanced keenly at the other. "You had better answer me, or I'll get the police to make you talk."

"Say," broke in the messenger.

"Well?"

"You work for Herbert, Wainwright & Strong. I know about you, and I know that you support your mother. So do I."

"Oh, I understand you," rejoined Harry. "You say that to create sympathy for you, but the scheme will not work. It is true that we are alike in the matter of supporting our mothers—if you tell the truth—but mine is supported by honest labor."

The other was silenced.

"Moreover," continued Harry, who was much more of an observer than most boys of his years, "I begin to understand that you are quite a deep schemer, quite an actor, and that you are playing a part during your everyday work. For the past few minutes your language has been as good as mine, and previously to that I have always heard you talk in the slangy, uneducated style of ignorant young toughs. In your excitement and fear you just now talked as correctly as you write."

The other stopped sniveling, and the blood rushed to his face as he heard his deceits laid bare by shrewd Harry Hale.

"Now," continued our hero, "I want you to understand that I am not to be fooled by you. Furthermore, I have no more time

to waste. You have got to make up your mind to talk to me or else to the police."

"You couldn't get a policeman to arrest me; he'd laugh at you."

"I wouldn't try. I'd march you straight to the police station, three blocks from here, tell my story and my suspicions, show the notebook, and then let them connect the descriptions with the recent robberies!"

"And suppose I won't go?"

"I'll make you. I'll thrash you into a state of submission first, and then I'll either drag or carry you there. Come, sharp is the word with me! Will you talk to me?"

"Suppose I do?"

"Then I'll protect you."

"Will you give me your word that no harm shall come to me?"

"I can hardly do that."

"Then what will I gain by 'giving away' to you?"

"I will not take any action against you if you tell me all I want to know."

"Well, I'm satisfied with that."

"Then come along."

"Where to?"

"A quiet place where we can sit down and talk."

"Will anybody else be there?"

"Yes, my employer, Mr. Herbert."

"And suppose he feels like turning me over to the police?"

"I will answer for him. He will be guided by me in this matter."

"One thing more," said the messenger. "I don't want to lose my job if I can help it, and yet I'll get into trouble if I stay away too long."

"I can arrange that," returned ready-witted Harry Hale. "I will go with you to your office, tell the manager that we've got some work to do that requires a boy of your size to do well, and hire your services for an hour or two. Mr. Herbert will pay the cost."

"That's a good idea. Come along."

And away strode the messenger at a quick pace.

Harry halted him.

"No treachery!" he warningly said. "I can sprint as well as fight, and so I warn you not to come any nonsense."

"Oh, I mean fair," said the messenger boy, in what sounded like truthful accents. "I'll not be sorry if this matter gives me a show to lead a better life."

Harry looked at him as they went along together, and he could not help feeling that the messenger seemed much more relieved than alarmed.

Studying the boy's countenance well, our hero came to the conclusion that there was much that was good in him, and he made up his mind there and then to help the lad along if he deserved it.

In a few minutes they reached the telegraph office, and the messenger went in first and gave in his book.

Then, according to the plan, Harry went in and engaged him.

This little scheme left the lad free for the next hour or two.

Harry conducted him straight to the real estate office, and found Mr. Herbert standing at the door.

A few words made Mr. Herbert understand what Harry wanted, and acting under a suggestion from the latter, Mr. Herbert placed his skilled shorthand writer behind the screen to take notes.

Then he beckoned to our hero that everything was all right, and Harry let the messenger into the private office.

"What is your name?" was Harry Hale's first question.

"Tom Clyne," was the reply.

"Then, Tom, take a seat and make yourself comfortable," kindly said Harry.

And he gave the boy an encouraging pat on the back that seemed to do him good, adding:

"You've only got to answer questions truthfully, and you'll not only escape punishment, but perhaps make friends."

"I hope so, sir," returned Tom, and looked up at Harry as though the latter were a man.

Harry took advantage of the seeming impression he had made, and started in at once:

"Do you know Harlington Mace?"

"Yes."

"How long?"

"A year."

"Then the story you told me about the bogus telegram was a lie?"

"No, it was the truth. Mace put up the whole job, and even made me do that little bit of 'skin' business with the other boy."

"As a blind?"

"Yes, so he shouldn't suspect I knew Mace."

"I see. What did he want that bogus telegram delivered for?"

"I don't know, but I suppose it was part of one of his jobs."

Mr. Herbert heard this, and breathed a sigh of relief, for it made it possible that his son's connection with the attempted robbery of the safe was unknown, except to the persons we have mentioned.

"Now," continued Harry, "I want another truthful answer. Are you an accomplice of Harlington Mace, or are you a victim?"

"I am a victim," earnestly replied Tom Clyne—so earnestly, and with so much feeling that Harry and Mr. Herbert both believed him. "I have never been a very good boy, and in jobs that I have had I 'knocked down' money to spend for theatres and other pleasures, but I do not want to be a criminal. Just listen to this:

"Less than a year ago I was an ordinary, careless, good-for-nothing boy.

"I had met Mace a few times, and I suppose he thought I was bright enough for him to use in his line of work.

"He put up a job on me. One day when I was standing in a crowd watching a parade, I was seized by a policeman, who thrust one hand into my pocket, drew forth a pocketbook that had been placed there without my knowledge, and held it up to view.

"That's it; that's mine!" shouted a young man by his side, and away I was dragged to the police station, accused of pocket-picking.

"I cried like a baby, for I could see that the case was a bad one according to appearances, and I had no friends to stick up for me. While I was crying in my cell at the police station in comes Harlington Mace.

"He pretended to be sorry for me, said he'd stick to me, and agreed to buy off the young man not to appear against me that afternoon in the police court, provided I would go to work for him at easy, safe work and good wages.

"I agreed to this, and then he told me that if I went back on him in any way he would have the young man cause my rearrest on the old charge and send me to jail.

"Nobody appeared against me at the police court, and a lawyer engaged by Mace made the judge believe that there was a mistake in the matter, and I was discharged.

"Within a week I found out that the young man was a pal of Mace, and then I saw that I had been the victim of a job, but the fear of State's prison was on me, and I did not dare rebel. From then until now I have been the victim of that scheme, and have obtained the information needed by Mace for his crimes!"

CHAPTER XIV.

BRINGING A BULLY TO TERMS.

All this Tom Clyne poured forth with the rapid, impassioned utterance of one who feels a sense of relief from making certain matters known.

Mr. Herbert and Harry had listened to him with the most breathless attention, and the slight scratching of a pencil over paper from behind the Japanese screen made it known that the recital was also heard by the stenographer concealed there.

"Well, Tom, you are making a clean breast of it," spoke up Mr. Herbert, "and as the first reward for your confession I can tell you that you need not fear the rearrest Mace threatened you with. That matter is ended, and you need fear nothing further from it."

"Oh, I'm so glad of that. I thought he could have me up again at any time."

"Now tell us what your work has been," here put in Harry.

"First, I was sent into offices to get estimates, or information, or anything that would keep me there a few minutes, so I could look at the fastenings of the doors and windows; but later on, Mace gave me a very good reference in writing, and I got work in the messenger office on his order. Right in the neighborhood I might enter one office ten times in a week, and so I'd be able to get a perfect description for him."

"You know what use was made of the information you wrote down?"

"I didn't know, but I supposed they were used for burglaries."

"And Mace pays you a salary for this work?"

"Yes, five dollars a week."

"In addition to your salary as a messenger boy?"

"Yes."

"Well, go on."

"I haven't any more to tell. I'll answer any question you put to me, but I've told you all I know."

"Don't you know, of your personal knowledge, of any burglaries that Harlington Mace has committed?" asked Mr. Herbert.

"No; I do not."

Mr. Herbert looked at Harry.

"What next?" he asked.

"I would advise that copies be made on the typewriter of this confession," said Harry, "and sworn to by Clyne before a notary. Then I can make a certain use of the confession."

He took Mr. Herbert aside and explained to him that he would read the confession to Harlington Mace, and threaten him with exposure and arrest unless he gave up the forged check.

This plan was agreed to, and copies were at once made.

With one of these properly witnessed and sworn to, Harry Hale felt that he would possess a very effective weapon.

While the copies were being made, Frank Herbert arrived at the office, and when Harry made known to him what had taken place, the young fellow's eyes sparkled with hope.

"That is encouraging," he said. "I think you will be able to bring him to terms. Oh, Harry, if I can only be free once more."

"Hush! don't let people hear you. When will I find Mace at home?"

"From now until two or three hours from now. He sleeps late."

"Then I'll go there as soon as I can have my sworn copy of the confession."

"Alone?"

Harry Hale laughed.

"Why, Frank, do you think I fear him?"

"No, not him alone, but he has pals, and they might knock you on the head."

"Murder me?"

"Yes."

"Why should they? They must know that I am not acting for myself."

"That's true enough, but Mace is smart enough to recognize that you are the brains of the movement against him, and may think to make himself safe by getting you out of his way."

"I'm not afraid."

"Better take a pistol."

"Never carried one in my life, and I don't think I want to begin to do so," quietly returned Harry Hale. "Anyhow, I don't expect to need force in this matter, which should be accomplished by skill and nerve."

Half an hour later on, a sworn copy of Clyne's confession was placed in Harry's hands, and away he went to Mace's home.

To be sure there was a little fluttering at his heart when he rang the bell, but it could not be said that he was afraid.

In fact, to tell the exact truth, he felt more of that sense of pleasant excitement which seizes upon some persons while hunting and giving battle to big and dangerous game.

The door was opened by a girl.

"Mr. Mace in?"

"Yes."

"Will you please take my card to him, and tell him I would like to see him?"

And fearless Harry Hale, accustomed to fair and fearless dealing, handed her his own neatly engraved card.

The girl ushered him into a neat parlor, and then ran upstairs with the card.

In a few minutes the door of the room was thrown open, and Harlington Mace entered.

He cast a keen, suspicious glance at our hero, and then looked swiftly around the parlor, as though seeking to learn if others were present.

"I am alone, Mr. Mace," spoke up Harry, who noted the glance.

"Your name is Hale?" asked Mace.

"Yes, as I informed you at our last interview, which took place about one o'clock in the morning."

"What do you want?"

"Don't be so gruff."

"Well, state your business, and be lively about it, too."

"I can't be very lively, Mr. Mace, because I've a somewhat lengthy document to read to you. You had better sit down."

"I'll stand till I get ready to sit down," the rascal snarled, eying Harry with a puzzled expression.

"You are in your own house," smoothly returned our hero, drawing forth the confession and smoothing out the creases. "Be kind enough to give me your attention while I read these interesting lines."

And in clear tones the lad read Clyne's confession.

Mace listened closely enough, but with a dirty sneer on his face.

"Well, is that all?" he asked.

"Yes, that is all to the confession."

"And what more have you got to say?"

"That it would make very interesting reading for the police."

"Bah!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"That the police would laugh at any such romancing by a boy. What is the object of all this?"

"I have come here to make a proposition to you. Give me the forged check which you hold as a threat over Frank Herbert's head, and this matter will be permitted to drop."

Mace's eyes gleamed, and his face flushed with sudden fury.

"Give up my hold on him—no, a thousand times no!" he snapped. "You're a cheeky meddler, and I've been a fool to waste a minute on you. You knocked me out of a small fortune—for I'd soon have bested that sneaking, sniveling Frank—and now you want to dictate terms and meddle a little more. Get out of here!"

Harry Hale arose.

His eyes blazed, but he struggled to keep cool.

When one is sixteen and an athlete, it is not easy to listen to bluster and reproach.

"Mr. Mace," he said, "this is not a matter of violence or force."

"Get out!"

"I've come here with a proposition, and that only requires a little talk."

"Get out of here, you preaching cub, or I'll throw you out."

"You can't do it!"

Harry's voice was ringing now, for his blood was up.

Harlington Mace, owing, no doubt, to the spite he felt against our hero, was fairly insane with rage.

His passion blinded his judgment, and with something like a roar of anger he ran furiously at the boy.

Harry, like the accomplished boxer that he was, advanced his left foot and placed his hands in position.

Mace made a clutch at him.

"I'll throw you through the window!" he almost shrieked.

"Not a bit of it," emphatically returned Harry Hale, and with a very nimble movement he evaded the man's outstretched hands, and as Mace went past him, carried on by the impetus of his mad charge, Harry hit him a fair, full blow in the side of the neck with his left.

It stopped Mace's onward progress, turned him around, and sent him flying across the room.

He fell with a crash against the wall, and then dropped to the floor just by the side of a large chair.

Harry ran to him, picked him up from the floor, and then fairly fired him down upon the seat of the big chair.

Mace's teeth clashed together.

Harry's blood was boiling, and he looked dangerous as he stood over his foe.

"Now, see here, Harlington Mace," he said, "I did not come here for fight. If I had thought force was necessary, I would have brought a pugilist along, for work of this kind is repugnant to me. However, I am here, alone, and I want to talk business with you, and I'm going to talk business with you, and if it is necessary to thrash you into a talking condition, then I'm ready to do it. Now, what have you got to say?"

And Harlington Mace rubbed his neck, looked for an instant at the boy who had bested him so easily, and answered:

"I'll talk business with you."

CHAPTER XV.

"STOP THE MAN WITH THE SCAR!"

Harry could hardly repress a smile.

"That's sensible," he said. "Matters like this do not call for force. Now let me tell you that in addition to having Tom Clyne's confession, we also possess that little notebook in which

he jotted down the descriptions that enabled you to burglariously enter several places of business."

"Do you suppose the police would believe such a yarn, told by a boy who had been arrested for picking pockets?"

"Yes, when the initials of the places described correspond with the initials of the firms who have lately been robbed."

Mace was silent for a moment.

"If I give you what you ask for, does that end the matter?" he asked.

"Certainly."

One minute more he reflected, and then his mind seemed made up.

"It's a go," he said.

"You'll give me the forged check?"

"Yes. I suppose Frank is playing the tearful, penitent dodge now?"

"He is sincerely penitent, and resolved to lead a good life," sternly said Harry. "He will have my help in the matter. I shall try to keep him upright and honest, as I am myself, and I'll make it interesting for anybody who tries to balk or hinder my good work."

And he looked the rascal meaningly in the eyes while speaking.

"Oh, don't worry yourself about me," the other rejoined, drawing forth a large wallet from an interior pocket, "because I'm done with him."

He opened the wallet, drew forth a number of papers, sorted them over carefully, and selected one from among them.

"There you are," he said, and handed it over to Harry, who felt his fingers thrill as he clutched it.

Our hero looked at it, saw that it answered the description given by Frank Herbert, and put it carefully away in his pocket.

"That's all, I suppose?" inquiringly said Mace.

"That's all, except to remember that Frank Herbert's moral welfare is in my charge," significantly returned Harry.

"I'll not bother you."

"I hope not. Good-morning."

"Good-morning."

And away went Harry Hale, feeling just as proud as a peacock.

"This makes Frank Herbert free," he said to himself, as he strode rapidly along, "and will make a happy family of the Herberts. I did not expect to accomplish the result in such a short time. How Gussie will beam with happiness when she knows this."

And he felt a queer tingling sensation travel through his veins at the thought of Gussie's smiling face.

In fact, he was so preoccupied that he hardly took any notice of his surroundings, and in this absorbed frame of mind turned from a side street into Broadway, and proceeded toward the real estate office.

Here the walking crowds of that busy thoroughfare compelled him to look up, and as he did so, he caught sight of a man running toward him, dodging in and out among the crowd, and shouting out loudly:

"There he is! Stop him! Stop the man with the scar!"

This made Harry understand that the man was not running at him, but at somebody behind him and near him.

Obedying a natural impulse, he was about to turn around, when he was violently jostled by somebody unseen.

The force with which somebody had fallen against him sent Harry full and plump against the man who was shouting.

The man clutched him to save himself from falling.

He was unbalanced, however, and finding himself going down, he tried to lift himself up by his hold on Harry.

As frequently happens under such circumstances, they both fell together in a rather confused heap.

Harry, however, fell on top, and was not a bit injured.

The man beneath him was sent to the hard sidewalk with great force, and the back of his head coming in contact with the hard stone, rendered him unconscious.

Harry picked himself up, but the man lay where he had fallen.

"He's dead!"

"No, only stunned."

"Send for an ambulance."

"No, carry him into the store."

"Say, young fellow, look out for your friend."

These and a dozen more sentences were shot at Harry in half a minute, while he was rubbing his bruises.

"He's nothing to me," spoke up Harry; "but he is hurt, and in need of assistance, and I'll help him."

He looked about him, and saw a drug store only a few feet away from where the mishap had taken place.

A bystander took the heels of the unconscious man, Harry seized him by the shoulders, and together they carried him into the drug store.

The druggist was quickly informed as to the nature of the trouble, and with the application of very simple remedies, managed to revive the man.

The latter, a well-dressed man, of middle age, who had the appearance of a prosperous merchant, looked around him in a dazed manner on opening his eyes.

"Where is he?" he asked.

"Here's the young fellow you collided with," said the friendly bystander.

"No, no; I mean the thief."

"What thief?"

"The man I was running for; the man with the scar?"

"I'm sure I don't know. I see you're doing all right, so I'll go," and the friendly gentleman walked off.

"How do you feel, sir?" asked Harry.

"Dizzy and sore," was the reply. "I ran into you, didn't I?"

"Hardly. I rather think that somebody gave me a push and shoved me into you."

"Very likely. I was so excited that I hardly know what happened. However, I do know that I saw that thief right behind you, and not more than ten feet away. I lost my head, foolishly, and raised an outcry when silence would have served me best. Had I followed the villain quietly and pointed him out to the first policeman I met he would now be in custody. Oh! how my head hurts."

"A few hours rest in bed is just the thing to restore you," here put in the druggist. "I would advise you to go home."

"I am willing to assist you home if you will permit me," volunteered Harry.

"Thank you, I will accept your aid. My name is Drayton, and I come from Providence. I am stopping at a hotel near by."

"Lean on my arm, Mr. Drayton," advised Harry, and he walked away with the man, who was still dizzy and uncertain.

"Ah! the fresh air makes me feel a great deal better," he said, but still he leaned heavily on Harry's arm. "How foolish I was to make an outcry. But when I saw the villain who had not only robbed, but had assaulted me in the most murderous manner, I forgot everything but my wrongs. Why, that man came very near to killing me!"

"In order to rob you?"

"Yes, my boy."

"Here?"

"No; in Providence. I am the senior member of the jewelry firm of Drayton & Fogg, of that city."

"And how long ago was this?"

"Two years ago last winter."

"Rather a long time to remember the face of a thief who was seen, I suppose, but a few minutes."

"Oh; I could only recall his face in a general way," said Mr. Drayton. "It was the peculiar scar on his neck that made an impression on me at the time, and I recognized it to-day just as I should twenty years from now if I were to see it."

"I understand you, sir. And the scar must have been very peculiar for you to have retained a mental impression of it."

"It was. It is blood red, and forms the letter 'X.'"

Harry stopped short.

"The letter 'X' did you say?"

"Yes," was the reply; "it forms a large, blood-red 'X' on this rascal's neck."

"And the man with this scar which you describe was following me?"

"Yes; he certainly was behind you."

Harry looked thoughtful.

"Mr. Drayton," he finally said, as they reached the hotel, "I would like to hear the entire story about the robbery. It must be interesting."

"Come to my room, my boy, and I'll tell it to you," said the jeweler, and, with an extremely thoughtful face, Harry went up with him.

There Mr. Drayton lay down on a bed, and told a thrilling tale of deep deception, of dastardly assault and daring robbery, while

Harry Hale listened intently, trying to engrave every word on his memory.

Twenty minutes later he left Mr. Drayton, after promising to call upon him again, and with wrinkles in his young forehead—so intently was he thinking—walked slowly away to the real estate office.

The first person he saw was Frank Herbert, who, consumed with anxiety, was hanging around the doorway.

"Well?" he whispered, eagerly.

"Success!" replied Harry, with pardonable pride.

"You've got it?"

"Yes."

"Show it to me."

"Is your father in his private office?"

"Yes."

"Then come in there, and we'll first examine the precious document, and then destroy it in the flame of the gas jet."

Into the private office they went, closed the door, and then Harry drew forth the check and placed it before the eager father and son.

"There it is," said Harry, "and I think——"

A sudden cry, almost a scream, broke in upon his words.

CHAPTER XVI.

"HARRY, HE HAS FOOLED YOU!"

Startled and surprised by the unexpected interruption, Harry and Mr. Herbert looked quickly at Frank, who, in the intensity of his feelings, had almost shrieked out.

They saw his face white and convulsed, and there was a sort of terror in his eyes as he looked at them.

"Father," he almost whispered, "this man does not mean to release me. He has got a hold on me, and does not mean to give it up."

"Frank, what do you mean?"

"I mean that this is not the check I forged, but one signed by himself."

"Do you mean that?" demanded Harry.

"Yes, I do," sadly returned Frank. "Harry, he has fooled you!"

A wrathful expression crept across Harry Hale's face.

"I'm not done with him yet," he grimly returned, and for the moment he felt rather glad that Harlington Mace had compelled him to use force.

If he had stood before Harry Hale just at that minute, Mace might not have escaped with whole bones.

"Frank, are you sure?" he asked.

"Sure," was the reply. "I suppose you looked at the check, found the amount, the date, the two different writings of the secretary and the signer, and was convinced that it was all right?"

"Exactly," returned Harry.

"Tell us what took place," requested Mr. Herbert, and Harry gave them a brief but clear recital of his mental and physical encounter with Mace.

"This shows us that we have a shrewd, brainy rascal to deal with," said Mr. Herbert. "It seems that he expected that a demand would be made upon him for the forged check, and prepared himself to meet the request by getting this one ready. It is probable that he reasoned that either you or I would come to him with a threat to sacrifice the boy's chances by his, Mace's, arrest for the attempted burglary in this office."

"And," bitterly broke in Frank Herbert, "I say to do just that. Let me take the risk of whatever it is possible for that villain to do to me, but don't let him escape."

"Oh, no, we're not going to sacrifice you," said Harry. "I've been fooled by the rascal, I will admit, and very cleverly, too, but I'll make a fool of him yet. Inasmuch as he might understand that a determined person would return to the charge, I cannot see much sense in what he has done."

"There was a chance that Frank would not even see the check," suggested Mr. Herbert. "I am much inclined to think that, had Frank not been here, I should have been fooled as you were, and would have destroyed the check after inspecting it."

"Then he probably counted upon the chance of that happening."

"So I think. Additionally, it enabled him to retain possession of the proof of Frank's crime for the present, with what purpose or view we do not know."

"Well, I shall go to him again, and make the same demand,

and threaten him as before with Clyne's confession," said Harry. "This time, however, I'll make a sure thing of getting the right piece of paper, for I'll take Frank along to identify it."

"I'll go with you," said Frank, "and if he refuses I'll take the villain by the throat and hang on to him until——"

"That will do, Frank," said Harry. "This game is not to be won by force, as my own experience shows. Brains, nerve, skill—these are the winning cards for us. Suppose we go right up there now?"

"You must be hungry."

"My appetite can wait."

"Then I'll go with you."

"Remember, Frank, I do the talking."

"Very well. Suppose it comes to fighting?"

"Then you can take a hand, if you deem it necessary," replied Harry. "Are we really to find others at Mace's house?"

"Yes. I have seen as many as half a dozen of his pals there. At least, I thought they were."

"Do you mean burglars?"

"I mean his pals in the different crimes and plans he commits."

"Is he the leader?"

"I think so."

"But you don't really know?"

"I do not. He never let me know anything about his business. He made me go on 'rackets' with him, led me into all sorts of dissipation, made me believe I was an injured hero, and led me up to the point where I entered into the scheme to plunder my father."

So they talked until they arrived at Harlington Mace's residence, and Harry rang the bell.

The same servant answered the summons.

"Mr. Mace in?"

"No; he went out right after you," was the very open statement, "and he hasn't come in again."

Harry glanced sharply at the girl, and could see that the reply was honest.

He thanked her, and walked down the steps with Frank.

"That girl spoke the truth," he said. "She had no instructions from Mace and gave a straight answer."

"So I think," rejoined Frank.

"Then there is not much chance of catching Mace to-day?"

"I should think not."

"I don't feel like waiting until to-morrow for an interview with him."

"Well," said Frank, thoughtfully, "it might be possible to run across him at some of his favorite haunts."

"When?"

"This evening."

"Good! Do you know several places which he frequents in the evening?"

"Yes; I've been there with him, and I don't think you would care to enter such places as I have in mind."

"Why not?"

"They are not respectable."

"Frank," quietly returned Harry Hale, "I shall not go into any of the places you speak of in quest of amusement, but to find a villain, to overcome him, to secure peace and happiness for your distressed father and sister, and with such a purpose in view, I would not hesitate to enter the most immoral 'dive' in the city of New York."

"You're right, Harry, and I'll say no more. We can do nothing, then, until evening."

"So it seems."

"Suppose we send a telephone message to my father, to relieve his anxiety, and then you go home with me to lunch?"

"Very well," assented Harry, and away they went.

Now, if Harry had been suspicious of any such matter as personal danger to himself, he would have noticed that for the past two hours, while visible, he had been kept under surveillance.

From the time he had left Mace's house in the morning, bearing with him the supposed forged check, his movements had been noted by a man of ordinary appearance.

This man had left Mace's residence within two minutes after Harry's departure, had soon come up within a hundred yards of our hero, and since that time had kept him in view when he was on the street.

So, now, the man followed leisurely along on the other side of the way, and neither one of the boys ever suspected that he was watching their movements.

They telephoned to Mr. Herbert, and then went to Frank's home for lunch.

There they were waited upon by Gussie, who wanted to heap three times more upon Harry's plate than he could possibly eat, and gave him so much attention, and asked so many questions, and seemed so pleased with the confident answers she got, that Harry was quite bewildered, and could hardly have told what he had eaten when the meal was finished.

Beyond all question, he was a hero in the girl's eyes, and more than once Harry surprised her sly glances of admiration, and blushed as furiously as she did.

It was growing late in the afternoon when he and Frank left the house, intending to go down to the real estate office.

The man who had been watching them was lounging behind the screening bulk of a big tree on the other side of the way.

Near him, spinning a top, was a boy of not more than ten.

The man waited until he saw the direction taken by Frank and Harry, and then he called to the little boy.

The latter picked up his top, ran to him, got a hasty message, and then ran fleetly down the street.

He passed Harry and Frank, turned a corner, halted, put his fingers in his mouth, and let out three shrill whistles that could be heard two blocks away.

Within three seconds after the vibrations of the whistles had died away, two hard-featured and very tough-looking young men appeared around the next corner, and the little boy ran up to them.

"Here he comes, an' anudder feller's wid 'im," he said. "De bloke for youse fellers is de one wid de white dicer."

And away ran the little urchin who had played his wicked part so innocently.

An instant later Harry and Frank, talking very earnestly, came to the corner.

"There he is," cried one of the tough young men.

"Which one?" cried the other.

"De one in de straw hat. He's de feller what insulted yer sister."

"Den I'll break his face!" roared the other, and as Harry Hale, surprised and startled, glanced up from the ground, he saw the toughest of the two tough-looking young men rushing at him with clinched fists.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE AUSTRALIAN "WHIRL."

Harry Hale had heard the words of the hasty conversation between the tough young men, and when he saw himself threatened with attack, he fathomed the secret of the matter at once. It went through his mind like a flash that this was what is commonly termed a "put-up job."

Now, Harry was not a fighter.

He could defend himself if necessary, and, for that matter, would have assumed the offensive in order to get out of an unpleasant situation; but fighting he looked upon as low and vulgar, the argument of brute force, and therefore repugnant to a boy who was by nature a gentleman.

Above all, he did not want to be mixed up in a disgraceful street brawl, and therefore made a swift turn that carried him out of the line of his opponent's rush.

Carried on by the impetus of his attack, the other shot past Harry before he could stop.

"Hold on!"

There was such a tone of command in our hero's voice that the brutal-looking assailant halted as he was about to renew his rush, and his companion, who stood ready to tackle Frank Herbert, also paused irresolutely.

"What for?" roared the first tough.

"Because you're making a mistake. I don't know your sister, and have not insulted anybody's sister. The whole amount of it is that this is a 'job' which you've been hired to do. I'm not a loafer, and I don't want to fight, so go about your business and save further trouble."

"That's as much as ter say dat I'm a loafer, is it?" roared the other.

"I didn't say so."

"But yer meant it."

"You had better go about your business."

"Not till I mash yer face," was the brutal rejoinder, and again he rushed at Harry Hale.

His first style of attack and the manner in which he held his hands informed Harry that he had to do with one who was probably a professional boxer, and he made up his mind that if he was to get clear of this scrape the battle must needs be short and sharp.

Only a few weeks before he had learned from his boxing teacher a celebrated blow used in Australia, and variously called the "pivot" and the "whirl."

It was hardly to be considered a fair blow, and in his friendly boxing bouts at athletic exhibitions Harry would not use it, but now he considered the use of almost any means of defense justifiable.

The tough young man struck at him quickly and heavily.

Harry blocked the blow with his left, raised his right arm so that the elbow was extended rigidly on a line with his chin, the hand being turned in toward the body, and then wheeled, as though on a pivot, turning like a flash to the right.

As he completed the swift circle, the point of his extended elbow came in contact with the tough young man's face.

The effect was astonishing.

It knocked him completely off his feet, and down he went.

His head struck the hard pavement with a crash, and there he lay.

Harry looked for the other one.

Obedying that barbarous instinct, that love of brutal contests and admiration of feats of strength and skill which seems implanted very generally in human beings, both Frank and the second tough young man had stood motionless, watching Harry and his opponent. When the latter fell, and did not get up again, his crony ran to him.

"Thunder! he's knocked out," was the comment the second tough made, as he bent over his friend and tried to rouse him.

Harry's blood was up now, and he turned to him with a flash in his eyes.

"You haven't a sister who's been insulted by me, have you?" he asked.

"No."

"And you don't want to take up your friend's quarrel, either?"

"I'm not looking for hard jobs," was the reply, and he stole a glance of admiration at Harry's well-knit form.

Three or four persons had run to the spot by this time, two or three trucks had stopped, and now a policeman came upon the scene.

"What's the trouble here?" he asked, and then he caught sight of Harry, and cried: "Why, how are you, young Mr. Hale?"

Harry looked up, and recognized the very policeman who had assisted him in the capture of the confidence man, Nosey Green.

"How do you do, officer?" he responded.

"Been a fight here?"

"No. I was attacked, and defended myself; that was all. Do you know these genteel specimens of humanity?" And he pointed to his vanquished foe, who was now getting upon his feet, with the aid of his companion.

The policeman looked hard at them.

"Yes, I know them both. One is 'Mug' Slater and the other is 'Corker' Blake. They are prize-fighters, toughs and general hard characters. The one you knocked down is 'Corker' Blake."

"Has he a sister?"

"No."

"That's what I thought."

"Do you want him arrested?"

"No; I haven't time to bother with him," said Harry. "Good-day."

"Good-day, Hale."

And away went Harry and Frank.

"Well, well," said Harry, "what do you think of this, Frank? That man Mace has thought it worth his while to hire professional bullies and fighters to pick a quarrel with me and pummel me in the street. The programme probably was to have the two of them punch and kick me into a state of insensibility, and I should probably have been carried in an ambulance to the hospital, more dead than alive. The fact that you were with me had the effect of altering the plan, and I had but one to deal with."

"Well, he'll not be in a hurry to tackle you again," burst out Frank. "Why, Harry, that was a terrible blow."

"Yes, and it was a fair enough one to use in such a case. Frank, I must be on the lookout for danger."

Acting upon the impulse caused by his own words, Harry turned short about and stood still.

The man who had been following him for some hours was about half a block away, and when Harry came to that sudden halt he slipped quickly behind a large telegraph pole, but not so quickly as to escape Harry's keen eyes.

"What's the matter?" inquired Frank.

"Wait. Walk on."

And Harry walked on for nearly half a block, then halted and wheeled again.

He saw the same man at about the same distance, and the fellow now turned into the front yard of a house, as though intending to enter a basement door, and passed from view.

Then on went Harry again for a short distance, turned, saw the same man again, and at once started back toward him at a brisk pace.

"Come on, Frank," he said. "We'll ask this fellow why he's following us."

But he didn't get the chance.

The man saw the athletic conqueror of "Corker" Blake coming swiftly toward him, and like a flash he turned short about and took to his heels, running as a man only can run when he is animated by fear.

Harry did not pursue him.

"It shows plainly enough that we are being followed," he said.

"Not we, but you," said Frank. "It is easy enough to understand the whole matter, I think. Mace recognizes the true condition of affairs. He sees that father is looking to you to straighten out the tangle, and he naturally thinks that if he can get you out of the way by any means, either by scaring or injuring you, he will not have much to fear. And he is right, too, for if he gets rid of you, who will carry out this battle, which you say is one of brains and skill? My father would either lose all control of himself and engage Mace in a personal combat, which would result in the death of either one, or else he would break down. In either event, what would be accomplished?"

"Well, for the sake of the work which has been put into my hands, I will be extra careful," said Harry. "Up to the present time I have gone along without a thought of danger, but now I shall be constantly on guard."

"Better carry a weapon," suggested Frank.

Harry shook his head.

"Can't take to the idea," he returned. "I say again that this task is not one which calls for force and arms."

"But you've had to use your fists on two separate occasions."

"For defense only."

"The need may arise again."

"Then I shall defend myself again. The thought of a weapon makes me shudder, for if I should happen to take a human being's life, I don't think I should ever get over feeling remorse. No, Frank, I shall carry out this battle on my plan, and trust to the use of the same tactics which have so far aided me."

"I don't see why you should be more particular than your enemy," said Frank. "Harlington Mace is evidently employing some pretty rough and unscrupulous people to disable you and remove you temporarily from his path, and clever as you are with your fists, you might make a better use of a club. In fact, I think it quite a shame that a genteel boxer like you should use his hands on toughs."

"No weapons for me," returned Harry, "unless I seized one in an emergency. My boxing teacher said that the man who is attacked and defends himself with his fists is a gentleman, and—"

His remarks were brought to a sudden halt by a loud shriek in a female voice, and at the same instant Harry Hale was clutched violently by the arm.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CONCERT GARDEN.

Harry stopped short, and turned upon the woman who had shrieked out and caught him by the arm.

It was his mother!

Her face was deadly pale, her hair was loose and untidy, tears trembled upon her cheeks, and her whole attitude and expression denoted fright and grief.

"Not dead, not dead!" she sobbed, and looked at him in such a curious manner that Harry was afraid for an instant that she had become insane.

"Certainly not, mother," returned Harry, who was much puzzled to account for all this. "What made you think that I was dead?"

"They said so."

"Who said so?"

"In the letter."

"What letter, mother?"

"Here it is."

They had been standing just where Harry had been stopped, and the boy noticed it was just around the corner from the real estate office.

He made the agitated woman sit down on the steps outside a house, while he opened and read a note which she had handed him. This is what it said:

"MRS. HALE: We greatly regret to inform you that while getting in a new safe to-day, the tackle broke, and your son, Harry, was so badly injured that it is feared he will die. The doctor says to come with all speed if you wish to see him alive.

"HERBERT, WAINWRIGHT & STRONG."

When he had read it, slowly grasping the intent of the dastardly communication, Harry clinched his strong hands, and a sullen red burned into his cheeks.

"The villain!" he gritted between his teeth, and had Harlington Mace made his appearance at that moment, it might have gone hard with him.

Mastering his anger, Harry handed the note to Frank.

The latter read it.

"Do you know the writing?" asked Harry.

"Yes."

"It is Mace's?"

"Yes."

"The villain can't fight fair," said Harry. "This makes me more bitter and more determined than ever to get the best of this man."

He turned to his mother, who was drying her eyes.

"Mother," he said, "how did you get this?" and he held up the note.

"A boy brought it. I read it, and when the meaning of the words were realized, I fell to the floor unconscious. When I came to my senses I found my neighbor of the floor below bathing my forehead, and asked her how long I had lain there. She told me only a minute or two, and then I seized my hat, and without waiting for a wrap of any kind, started off for the real estate office, thinking to find you dying or dead. Oh, Harry!"

And she shudderingly broke out crying again, and that angry flush once more crept into Harry's cheeks.

"Calm yourself, mother," he gently said. "This is only a contemptible trick. I will take you home, and as we go along I will make you understand the reason of it."

Then he turned to Frank.

"Of course you can understand the intention of the rascal," he said. "He expected to make my mother ill, and perhaps thought that the fright occasioned by his brutal letter would lay her on a sickbed. That would either detain me at her side or seriously interfere with my active work against him. I am going home with my mother, and shall put her on her guard against any such wicked deceptions. You can tell your father what has occurred, and we can meet this evening."

They fixed a time and place for their meeting, and parted.

On the way home, without letting her know the true facts of the matter, Harry made his mother understand that he was conducting negotiations of delicacy for his employer, and that he had already created such an impression upon the parties hostile to Mr. Herbert that they were adopting mean measures to disconcert and annoy him, and thereby cause him to relinquish the task.

"I understand, Harry," said the intelligent and spirited woman. "They shall not make me a stumbling block in your way."

"That's right, mother."

"I'll pay no attention to any communication of an alarming character. They shall not make a dupe of me."

"That's the talk, mother dear. Only consideration for you could stop me from carrying out this work, which I feel confident of conducting to a successful issue."

He spent a pleasant hour with his mother, had supper, and leaving Mrs. Hale in a contented and peaceful frame of mind, went out to keep the engagement he had made with Frank Herbert.

Frank met him promptly on time. In fact, he had been waiting for him.

"Father and I both have the same idea about you, Harry," he

said. "We think that Mace will succeed in disabling you in some manner, and then will come to father and offer him a compromise upon terms that will nearly beggar him."

"It will never come to that," reassuringly returned Harry. "I may find my man to-night, and if not, I shall make a call upon him bright and early in the morning."

"You will again threaten him with Tom Clyne's confession?"

"Yes."

"And suppose he still stands out and tells you to do your worst?"

"Then," triumphantly returned Harry, "I have another string to my bow."

"What is that?"

"I prefer to keep it secret for the present. If we call upon Mace to-morrow, you will be with me, and will learn what it is."

"You mean that you have another threat to menace him with?"

"Yes."

"And as strong a one as the messenger boy's confession?"

"A much stronger one."

"Good!"

They strolled up Sixth Avenue, and into one of the numerous dives which go by the names of concert halls, concert gardens, Alhambra courts, and various other designations, none of which would properly describe the true character of the vile places.

Harry Hale, upright and honest, a gentleman by nature, felt nothing but disgust as he viewed his surroundings.

The odors of liquor and cigarettes were in the air, the place resounded with the shrill notes of a painted woman who was shrieking forth a song from a low stage, and scores of men and women sat at tables drinking and talking.

Accustomed to refinement, to the healthful, moral atmosphere of a Christian home, Harry almost felt sick.

Still, he was here with a purpose—an end that justified the means, however distasteful—so he shook off the feeling of disgust and abhorrence which clung to him.

Keenly and carefully he and Frank looked over the gay assemblage, but saw nothing of Mace.

Out they went, and half a block distant entered a similar resort.

Just as they went in a dissipated-looking man with a big cigar in his mouth caught sight of them.

"Hello, Frank!" he cried.

Herbert turned, and recognized a frequenter of the garden whom he had met when in company with Mace.

The meeting gave him an idea.

"Hello, Fred," he pleasantly returned. "Been here long?"

"Half an hour."

"Seen Mace?"

"Yes."

"Is he inside?"

"He was, but he went away not more than ten minutes ago."

"Where to?"

"That's more than I know; but he's coming back, for I heard him say so to some one he was talking to."

"Did he say when he'd be back?"

"No, but it's not likely that he'll be very long if he told any one he was going to return."

Herbert turned to his companion.

"We had better wait," he suggested.

"Certainly," assented Harry.

"Have a drink?" asked the young man called Fred.

"I don't care if I do," very naturally returned Frank Herbert.

"Mr. Montgomery, this is my friend, Mr. Hale."

Harry bowed.

Then he seized Frank by the arm.

"No strong drinks," he whispered.

"Here are seats for us," spoke up Montgomery, sitting down at a table which had just been abandoned, and all three sat down.

"What are you drinking? I'm going to have that favorite drink of yours, Frank—a whiskey sour."

"Well, I've quit for a time," said Frank, "so I'll take a ginger ale."

"Aha! turned temperance, eh?"

"Yes," rather sheepishly returned Frank, for he was not the kind to stand bantering very well.

"He has promised his father to drink no more strong liquor, and he will keep his word," here put in Harry, quietly but firmly.

"No friend of his will tempt him to break his promise."

"Oh, have your own sweet way about it," gayly returned Montgomery. "Sing out your order."

Just for the sake of ordering something, our hero called for a glass of soda-water.

Just as he gave the order, a man walked through the folding summer doors of the garden, caught sight of the three, and quickly dodged back beyond the doors again. Parting them slightly, he caught the eye of a man seated near Harry Hale, and beckoned him to come to him.

The first man was Harlington Mace.

CHAPTER XIX.

HARRY GETS HIS FACE SLAPPED.

The man to whom Harlington Mace had beckoned was one of the type usually found in such resorts, a ruined "sport," flashily dressed, and stamped with the undeniable marks of dissipation. He was a "hanger-on" in the garden.

He came out to Mace at once.

"Hello, Mace!" he said.

"Good-evening. You look dry, Pete."

"I am. Haven't had but two drinks so far this evening," muttered the broken-down "sport."

"Well, here's enough to buy several drinks."

And he held out a five-dollar bill, which Pete eagerly clutched.

"What am I to do for it?" he asked, divining, with the shrewdness of his class, that the money prepaid a required service.

"Look," said Mace, slightly parting the swinging doors, and pointing to the table where Harry sat, "do you see that table where the three young fellows are sitting?"

"Yes."

"I want you to put up a job on the one on the left."

"The broad-shouldered one?"

"That's right."

"What do you want?"

"I want him punched, kicked and thrown out."

"I can have it done for you," coolly said the man. "But say, Mace."

"What?"

"He looks like a tough boy to handle."

"Well, he is; but after all, he's only a boy, something like sixteen years old, I think, and your friend, the bouncer, ought to eat him without pepper and salt."

"Oh, Billy can whip him."

"Of course he can. This boy will show fight, and that will give Billy the right to do him up for the hospital."

"I'll see that he does," asserted Pete. "Is that all?"

"That's all."

"Then watch me work it."

And away he went to carry out his part of the villainous scheme which Harlington Mace had hastily conceived on catching sight of Harry Hale, and which was designed to place our hero in a battered and damaged condition, under a doctor's care.

Straight to the table where Harry sat walked the man called Pete.

He seized a chair that was vacant near at hand, placed it alongside Harry, and sat down.

"Good-evening," he said, and slapped him familiarly on the back.

Harry looked at him with both surprise and disgust, and moved his chair away just as far as he could.

"I don't know you," he said.

Montgomery laughed outright, and Frank looked embarrassed.

"Oh, I'll introduce myself," gayly returned the man. "My name is Pete."

"I have no wish to know you," quietly replied Harry.

"Don't be so cranky," said Pete. "Are you going to treat?"

"Treat you?"

"Yes."

"No, I'm not."

"Maybe I'm not good enough for you to drink with?" said Pete, getting genuinely angry at Harry's cool and disdainful manner, and beginning to color up.

"I don't know anything about your goodness, so that isn't the reason," calmly returned the boy. "I wish you would go away and not interfere with me."

"Oho! how high and mighty you talk for a boy," sneered Pete, and his voice went up with every word until it almost reached a

shriek. "You've got a dirty, insulting tongue, and it's easy to see that you don't know how to speak to a gentleman. I've got money of my own, and I don't need to ask you for your mean, grudging drink, but——"

"Here! here!" broke in an authoritative voice, and a hard-featured, burly-looking man rushed up to the spot. "What's all this rumpus about?"

It was the "bouncer" of the garden, the hired bully who undertakes to maintain order in such vile places.

Pete jumped up, excitedly.

Harry sat there.

His companions, much more concerned than he was at the turn affairs had taken, had half arisen from their seats, and their faces expressed apprehension.

"What's up?" again asked the "bouncer."

"That young fellow insulted me," declared the man, pointing to Harry. "He's treating me like a loafer."

"What, that boy?" cried the "bouncer," looking at Harry in a little surprise. "Maybe he didn't mean anything by it, and he'll apologize. Say, young fellow, apologize to this gentleman."

"What for?" asked Harry.

"He says you insulted him."

"And I say I didn't."

"You said I wasn't good enough for you to drink with," falsely asserted Pete.

"When you say that you are uttering a deliberate lie," said Harry.

"Here, that'll do, young fellow!" broke in the "bouncer," glaring angrily at Harry. "It's easy to see that you're cheeky, and you've got to come down a peg."

"I'll tell the truth," said upright and honest Harry Hale, "and nobody shall make me say what is not true. I've insulted nobody, and I'll apologize to nobody."

"Oh, you only want that wagging jaw of yours slapped," contemptuously remarked the other, and with that he swung his open hand and struck Harry a heavy blow on the cheek that knocked him bodily from the chair, and sent him sprawling to the floor.

In an instant he was on his feet.

He was a gladiator by nature, and at that moment every drop of honest blood in his body was fairly boiling with fiery indignation.

He fairly leaped at the "bouncer," his eyes flashing, his cheeks aflame.

The big bully who had struck him was not prepared for resistance on the part of a mere boy, but as Harry leaped toward him, he instinctively lifted his hands and presented a guard.

With all his natural force, and with all that unnatural force which arises from indignation and anger, clever Harry Hale struck out with his clinched right hand.

The "bouncer's" guard did not save him from the well-directed blow.

It landed upon the point of the chin, a most stunning and confusing place to deliver a blow, and the "bouncer" threw up his hands and fell sheer backward to the floor, while over him, with furiously blazing eyes, stood the thoroughly aroused boy, ready to strike another blow if needed.

But the prostrate man didn't get up.

He had been rendered unconscious by the well-directed blow, and lay upon the floor without a sign of life.

Montgomery stared in wonder at the powerful boy who had laid low a man he had long regarded as formidable, while Frank Herbert, afraid that a general attack might be made by the waiters, plucked Harry by the sleeve.

"Let us go out, Harry."

"All right. I've had enough of this miserable place," returned Harry. "Come along."

Montgomery did not offer to go with them, so Frank and Harry started for the door together.

There were many murmurs, and some muttered threats, but Harry walked with head erect and eyes flashing, and no one dared to take the initiative in an attack upon the powerful boy.

Three of the waiters exchanged glances, and moved quickly toward the swinging doors, meeting there in advance of Harry's arrival.

Frank saw the movement, and called Harry's attention to it.

"They're in your way," he said, "but I'm good for one of them."

Harry glanced at the men who blocked his road to freedom.

"I'm going through those doors," he said, in a clear, firm voice, "and the man that stands in my way will get hurt."

He strode resolutely on, and the waiters, with the fate of the "bouncer" fresh in their minds, lost their courage.

Awed by the fiery gleam of his eyes, and daunted by his fearless mien, the cowardly fellows drew aside and permitted him and Frank to pass through the swinging doors.

Frank was the first through.

The young athlete had purposely passed out last in order to insure Frank's exit.

Just as Frank emerged from the interior, and before Harry was fairly through the swinging doors, he uttered a cry.

Harry hastily leaped out.

"What is it, Frank?"

"There he goes."

He pointed up the street, and Harry was just in time to catch a glimpse of a man jumping on the platform of a moving car.

"Who was it?"

"Mace."

"Sure?"

"Sure."

"Then he was watching the scene inside the garden, and the whole matter was another of his plots to disable me," said Harry. "Well, I'm still active, and I shall be able to use strategy instead of force when I see him in the morning."

"It's no use looking any longer for him to-night, so we may as well go home," said Frank. "You seem to be in danger all the time, Harry, so I'll walk as far as your home with you, as a sort of body-guard."

"That's not necessary," said Harry. "I think you will admit that I can take care of myself, and, for that matter, it is not likely that Mace will make another attempt upon my body and bones to-night. He is capable of anything, however, and I shall not neglect to securely lock and bolt the bedroom door and the other doors and rooms. I don't fear him, but I'll not overlook any reasonable precaution to secure my own safety."

"That's right, Harry," gravely said Frank, "for it is no exaggeration to say that the only chance of recovering the forged check lies with you."

"To-morrow," said Harry, "it shall be in my hands."

CHAPTER XX.

"ARE YOU FOND OF HEARING STORIES?"

Long before Harry reached home, his right cheek was burning and throbbing where the heavy hand of the "bouncer" had landed.

The blow had been a hard one, hard enough, as we know, to knock Harry from his chair, but the boy did not think it had marked him in any way. He was much surprised, therefore, when his mother opened the door for him, and at once uttered a little scream.

"Oh, Harry, your cheek!"

Harry ran to a small mirror and looked in, eagerly.

The impression of five big fingers was there, as clearly as alternating lines of red and white could mark.

"Mother," he said, "a cowardly brute, a big, powerful man, struck me with his open hand without cause."

His mother's eyes flashed.

"And did you resent it?"

"I knocked him down," briefly responded the boy.

"Good!" cried the spirited woman, whose father and grandfather had been soldiers, and who was as nobly warlike as she was refined and gentle. "Do not brook insult or abuse from any man."

Then her expression changed.

"Harry, you were not fighting?"

"Mother, I do not fight, because I look upon it as low, brutal and altogether unbecoming a gentleman. On this occasion, as on a few others that have happened, I was merely defending myself."

"My brave boy!" cried his proud mother, kissing him fondly and approvingly. "Let me bathe your injured cheek."

Harry slept soundly that night, and right after an early breakfast started away.

He had arranged with Frank Herbert that the latter should take up a position on the corner nearest Mace's house at daylight, so that he might be able to say whether the rascal came home or went out.

Frank had stood for hours at his post when Harry arrived.

"Well?" inquired the latter.

"He's there," responded Frank. "He did not get in until five

o'clock this morning, and as I've not taken my eyes off the house, I'm sure he's there now."

"Did you see anybody else go in?"

"No, nor out. I'm inclined to think that he is quite alone."

"All the better. It's early yet, so you get your breakfast, and I'll stand guard. When you come back, we'll make our call."

In an hour Frank came back, and then the two lads walked straight to Mace's house, and Harry rang the bell.

The same servant responded.

"Oh, you want to see Mr. Mace?" she said, recognizing Harry at once. "He's out."

"You don't mean that he's out," pleasantly said Harry, putting his foot forward so that the girl could not close the door; "you mean that he told you to say that he was not at home if anybody called."

The girl looked rather astonished, and was, evidently, at a loss what to say.

With a confident smile, Harry pushed his way into the hallway, and Frank Herbert followed him.

"He's not at home to strangers," glibly continued our hero, "but he's always willing to see old friends, isn't he, Frank?"

"Certainly," responded Frank. "I've been here earlier than this, and he has never refused to see me."

The girl looked rather bewildered by all this cool talk, and stood there, twisting her apron strings in irresolution.

Just at that moment hasty steps were heard inside the hall above, and a voice called:

"Mary!"

"Yes, sir," responded the servant.

"What's all that talking about?"

Harry Hale spoke up:

"Only a couple of visitors to see you on a little matter of business, Mr. Mace," he said, for he had recognized the voice from above.

Something like an imprecation floated down the stairs, and then Mace's scowling face was seen over the balusters.

"Oh, you're here again, are you?" he cried, his eyes resting on Harry's face.

"Yes," was the firm response. "I am here again, Mr. Mace, having survived the planned and paid-for assault of last night in the street, and that of a 'bouncer' in a vile concert garden. Moreover, my mother is alive and well, despite the dastardly attempt to drive her insane or stretch her on a bed of sickness, by lying to her about my accidental death. I am here in spite of all these matters which I have rehearsed, and I want you to understand that recalling them does not put me in the condition of mind that will put up with trifling."

"I don't know what all this long rigmarole has to do with me," returned Mace, descending the stairs; "but I'll come down and talk with you."

Harry threw open the door of the parlor, in which he had held his former interview with Mace.

"Shall we go in here?" he asked.

"Certainly," responded Mace.

He was all politeness now.

Frank nudged Harry.

"This looks bad," he said. "He's altogether too nice. He means to stand out."

"I'll make him give in," confidently returned our hero.

"Sit down," politely requested Mace, and placed chairs for them. "To what am I indebted for the honor of this visit?"

"Mr. Mace," quietly said Harry, "I came here yesterday and threatened you with the law if you did not give up the forged check which this dupe of yours signed. You pretended to comply with my request, and gave me a carefully-prepared imitation. I have come here this morning with the same request."

"Which I refuse to comply with," blandly returned the rascal. "Then I shall take Tom Clyne and his sworn and witnessed confessions into court."

"Do so, if you wish."

"You would certainly be indicted."

"Perhaps so."

"And arrested."

"Possibly. Being able to furnish bail, I would be at liberty within an hour. I am not short of money, and can hire lawyers who would ridicule the romantic story of the messenger boy until it was laughed out of court. Even if you could have everything your own way in the matters of indictment, trial, appeal,

etc., you would still find that the man with money can make a wonderful fight to keep out of jail."

All of which Harry Hale knew to be perfectly true, and he could not but admit the strength of Mace's position.

However, he had another arrow to shoot, and he did not despair.

"You absolutely refuse, then, to give up the forged check?" he asked.

"I do."

"Then I shall go at once with Tom Clyne to the proper authorities, and you may look for your arrest at any time," said Harry, rising from his seat.

"Go ahead," was the defiant rejoinder.

The villain was determined not to yield upon this line of attack, so Harry sat down again.

"Before I go, Mr. Mace," he said, "I would like to tell you a story. Are you fond of hearing stories?"

"If they are good ones," carelessly returned the villain, but he shot a keen, curious glance at the brainy boy who had battled so expertly with him.

"Listen attentively," requested Harry, "and I think you will pronounce this story very good, full of interest, and as thrilling as anybody could wish a story to be."

"My story goes back a couple of years. In fact, the affair took place two years ago last winter in the city of Providence."

Harry was positive that Mace started slightly at this.

He fixed his keen eyes full on the rascal's face, and went on with his story:

"Drayton & Fogg is the name of a well-known firm of jewelers."

"At night their store was guarded by a trusty watchman."

"One day this watchman was taken suddenly ill, near closing time."

"The two clerks employed by the firm had been with them but a short time, and Drayton & Fogg did not care to ask either of them to take the place of the watchman, although a large amount of new goods had just come in."

"The goods which had just been delivered were for the holiday trade, and represented a large investment on the part of the firm. Coming by express rather late in the day, and being much too bulky to place in the safe, which was already quite full, they lay in sealed packages behind the counter, awaiting the work of marking and displaying the following morning."

"Under these circumstances, the partners decided that either one of them would have to assume the place of the sick watchman for that night, at least, and so they tossed a coin to decide which should stand the first watch."

"The decision gave the task to Mr. Drayton, a man of middle age, a quiet, resolute gentleman, who was possessed of a fair share of courage."

"It was midwinter—in fact, just about a week or so before Christmas, the newly-purchased goods being intended for the holiday trade. The night was exceedingly cold, the coldest that the residents of Providence experienced that very cold winter."

"Mr. Drayton examined the watchman's revolver, and saw that it was in good order. He placed it behind the counter, turned on the draughts of the big stove in order to keep the store comfortably warm, and had just sat down to read a book, when there came a knock at the front door."

"It was just midnight."

"Wondering what the cause of the summons could be, Mr. Drayton walked hastily to the door."

"A heavy blind of brown holland covered the plate glass of the door, and drawing this aside, Mr. Drayton peered out into the well-lighted street. In front of the door stood a policeman in full uniform."

Harry paused, his eyes fixed on Mace.

CHAPTER XXI.

HARRY'S TRIUMPH.

"Do you find my story interesting?" he asked.

"Quite so," affably returned Mace. "You talk like a book, and are really very entertaining. By all means, go on."

"I am glad you like it," returned Harry, in a very dry tone. "I trust the balance of the story will meet with your approval. To resume:

"Mr. Drayton glanced inquiringly at the officer, and the latter, bending down, so as to bring his mouth on a line with the keyhole, said:

"Mr. Drayton, I'm afraid my right foot is freezing. Be kind enough to let me in long enough to examine it."

"Mr. Drayton at once opened the door, and in came the policeman, walking with a stiff and painful step.

"I'm really afraid my foot is nipped by the frost," said the officer, advancing toward a chair, with a difficult step, and sitting down with a sigh of relief. "I stood a very long time on the next block, watching another store where the goods have not been properly put out of sight, and my right foot seems dead."

"And then he shivered violently, and complained of being cold all over.

"He made an attempt to pull off the right boot with his hands, muttered something about his fingers being too much chilled to grip, and then tried to remove the right boot by using the toe of the left.

"He had made several ineffectual attempts in this manner, when kind-hearted Mr. Drayton said:

"I'll take it off for you, officer."

"Then he knelt down, seized the boot, and began to draw on it.

"Swish!

"Something hummed through the air.

"Mr. Drayton had remarkably acute hearing, and on this occasion it probably saved him from a cracked skull, for it was the heavy club of the policeman that he had heard, and the involuntary dodge of the jeweler resulted in his receiving on his shoulder a blow that was intended for his head.

"Startled, astonished, in pain and wonder, he looked hastily up, and caught the eyes of the man in uniform fixed on him with a cold, murderous glance!

"In an instant he understood that he was in danger, and with a quick motion he caught at the fellow's throat.

"He secured a slight hold, but again that murderous club buzzed through the air, and this time caught him on the head.

"It was a glancing blow, however, and only half stunned him.

"It made him release his hold on the villain's throat, but with the energy of despair he once more made a similar clutch at the same place, thinking to drag down the rascal who stood over him.

"Again he secured his hold, but just as he did so, the murderous club again came whirling through the air, guided by the merciless arm of the uniformed rascal, and this time it caught the unfortunate jeweler fairly on top of the head.

"Down upon the floor went poor Drayton, unconscious.

"When he recovered his senses, he found himself lying in bed at his home, and also learned, to his astonishment, that nearly two weeks had elapsed since the termination of that murderous battle in his store. The policeman, of course, was a bogus one, and he had plundered the store.

"No information could be obtained until Mr. Drayton recovered the use of his brain, and when he had told his terrible story, no clue to the robber could be found. The firm had been robbed of many thousands of dollars in goods, the police had not the slightest clue, and there the matter practically ended.

"Mr. Drayton, however, is a man with a memory, a good memory under ordinary conditions, and under the extraordinary conditions attached to this particular case, his memory became equally remarkable. Yesterday, on Broadway, Mr. Drayton, just a short time after I had left you, saw and recognized the man who had assaulted and robbed him in his store in Providence."

"Is it possible?" cried Mace.

"Not only possible, but true; and, Mr. Mace, you are the man!"

The villain threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"I thought that was coming," he said, shaking with merriment. "I have listened to your story because you have an entertaining style, but I knew all about it before."

"Of course you did."

"Oh, not from personal knowledge, but because it was told to me by my brother Sam, when I visited him in Sing Sing about a year ago. We are twin brothers, and when Sam was sent up for a year, I paid him a visit, and took him some luxuries. He told me the story then, and warned me to keep away from Providence, in order to avoid the possibility of a case of mistaken identity on the part of this Drayton. Sam is out of Sing Sing, and I know he was in the city yesterday, so there is little doubt that Mr. Drayton saw and recognized him on Broadway."

He said it all with such an easy, truthful style that Frank Herbert nodded his head, as though saying to himself, "That explains it."

Harry was not a bit disconcerted.

"You must not suppose that Mr. Drayton remembered the face of the thief perfectly. He identified him by means of a scar, a blood-red facsimile of the letter 'X' on the side of the villain's neck!"

"That's right," rejoined Mace. "Sam has just such a scar as you describe."

"When did you see your brother Sam last?"

"Oh, a long time ago."

"He wasn't in this house yesterday morning?"

"No."

"Sure?"

"Of course I'm sure."

"Then it's very remarkable that the man who gave me the prepared check instead of the forged one which I had demanded had this identical scar upon the side of his neck!"

The confident expression faded from Harrington Mace's smiling countenance.

"Nonsense!" he said, turning slowly on his heel, so as to expose both sides of his neck to inspection. "You can see for yourself that I have no such scar."

"It is not visible now, because you have covered it up with the skill acquired by the daily practice of years," steadily said Harry. "I told you that Mr. Drayton clutched the robber by the throat, but I did not tell you that in doing so he tore from the rascal's neck a piece of gold-beater's skin, covered with flesh-tinted paint. This act revealed the previously-hidden scar, and the skin was found imbedded in the jeweler's nails the next morning. Now, sir, do you remember that you and I came to blows in this very room yesterday morning?"

"Yes," growled the other.

"I struck you in the neck," said Harry, "and the blow knocked off your artistic patch, and revealed the blood-red facsimile of the letter 'X.' When Mr. Drayton told me his story an hour or so later, I was enabled to identify the man who had assaulted and robbed him!"

Mace's assurance had all vanished now, and he was gnawing at his fingers like a wolf.

"I see that you have applied your painted bit of gold-beater's skin over the scar as cleverly as ever," went on Harry, "but it would require but a moment for me to pick it off. This is a little diplomatic fight, Mr. Mace, but if force becomes necessary, I can hold you motionless while Frank Herbert detaches the patch."

Mace snarled like a caged tiger.

"Mr. Drayton is stopping at a hotel not far away, and I can send Frank for him while I hold you quiet here," said Harry. "It would do him good to give you in custody."

Another snarl.

"It is a shame that such a villain should even temporarily escape the consequences of such a crime, but my interest in Frank compels me to give you a chance," said Harry. "Unless you want me to turn you over to Mr. Drayton, give up the forged check."

Only an instant did the rascal hesitate.

"If I give you what you want," he said, "what assurance have I got that you will not blab to Drayton?"

"My word," proudly answered Harry; "which is just as sacred when pledged to a villain as to a gentleman. I live upright and honest; I tell the truth under all circumstances, and even such as you may trust my pledge."

How the words did ring through the room.

They settled the matter for Harrington Mace.

Again he drew forth the wallet from which he had taken the prepared check, and extracted a carefully-prepared piece of paper, which he at once placed in Harry's hands.

The latter handed it to Frank.

"Examine it well," he said.

Frank looked it over carefully, from side to side, from top to bottom, and front and back.

"This is the one," he said.

"You are absolutely sure?"

"Absolutely so."

"Very well. Delays are dangerous. Take one of the matches you see on the mantel and light that gas jet at the side of the piano."

Frank obeyed.

"Now, burn it," instructed Harry. "We cannot tell what attempts this villain might make to recover that important bit of paper if we endeavored to convey it to your father. Reduce it to ashes, and your troubles will cease."

Gladly, indeed, did Frank Herbert obey the orders of his triumphant young champion, and held the forged check in the flame of the gas until he was compelled to let fall the minute corner of the paper that was singeing his fingers.

Then they left the crest-fallen villain, and hurried away to carry the news to the anxious father and the equally anxious sister, Frank agreeing to travel with all possible haste down to the real estate office, while Harry was assigned to the agreeable task of informing Gussie about the triumph of the morning. Our hero, not being satisfied with his attire, went home to dress himself more becomingly, and an hour later, in a very proud and happy frame of mind, turned the corner of the street in which Gussie lived just in time to hear a girlish voice scream:

"Help! Save me!"

CHAPTER XXII.

HARRY LONGS TO SETTLE DOWN TO BUSINESS.

Harry had been walking along with his head down, thinking deeply, when he turned, quite mechanically, the corner that led him into the street where the Herberts lived.

The screaming cry for help, however, caused him to quickly raise his head, and he looked in the direction from which the cry came.

The street was deserted, except for the presence of a coach which was rolling away at a very ordinary gait, having just started from in front of a house, either the one occupied by the Herberts, or else one in that immediate vicinity.

Harry got just one good look at the coach, and then it turned the next corner and was at once out of sight.

Acting on the impulse of the moment, Harry ran quickly to the next corner.

The coach was not to be seen.

It had turned to the right, so the boy turned the same way, ran one more block, halted at the corner, and looked eagerly up and down the street, but not a sign of the coach did he see.

"After all," muttered Harry, "there was really nothing to connect the scream and the coach, for the latter might have been on an ordinary errand, and the cry for help might have come from any one of the houses on the block.

Still, there was an unpleasant feeling in his mind, as he slowly retraced his steps, and he felt just a trifle excited when he rang the bell at Mr. Herbert's residence.

"Good-day, sir," respectfully said the servant who came to the door, for she at once recognized him.

"Is Miss Gussie in?" rather breathlessly inquired Harry Hale.

"No, sir."

"Gone to her father's office?"

"I don't know, sir."

"When did she go out?"

"Not more than five minutes ago, sir."

"In a carriage?"

"Yes, sir."

Harry Hale felt a cold shiver run up and down his back.

Now he began to feel sure that something was wrong, and that there was some connection between the scream for help and the departure of the coach.

"Now, Mary," he said, "you tell me that she went away in a carriage. How did she come to do so?"

"Why, sir, it was this way: The bell rang, and I went and opened the door, and there stood a coach at the curbstone, and the driver was on top of the steps, with a letter in his hand.

"For the young lady," he says, and hands me the letter, and I saw that it was addressed to Miss Gussie.

"I'm to wait for her," he says, and walks down the steps and mounts his box and sits there.

"I ran to Miss Gussie with the letter, and she tore it open, read it, turned white, and gave a little cry, and said she must go, and with that she just picked up her hat, put it on and rushed out, leaving me kind of fuddled and bewildered. I ran downstairs when I got my senses, but by that time she was in the coach and it off, and I think you ran after it, sir."

"Yes, I did, but I lost track of it. And you don't know who sent for her?"

"No, sir; but I thought, naturally, that it was her father, and that something had happened at his office."

"What became of the letter?"

"I'm not sure, but I think she threw it on the floor."

"Get me that letter, Mary."

Away ran the girl, alarmed by the expression of Harry's face.

The latter sat down in the hallway, and shook his head.

He didn't like the look of matters.

Back came Mary with a crumpled letter in her hand.

Harry seized it eagerly.

This is what he read, written in a clear, clerkly hand:

"MISS GUSSIE HERBERT: Your father has met with a serious accident, and is now being attended in his private office by two doctors. The case seems so serious to me that I take the liberty of sending a carriage for you, in order that you may come without delay to your stricken parent if you desire to do so. The driver will wait for you. Very truly, etc.,

"THOMAS STRONG."

That was all.

Harry looked keenly at the letter.

He was not familiar with the handwriting of the junior partner in the real estate firm, and whether Gussie knew Mr. Strong's chirography was more than he could say.

It seemed "straight" enough.

"As to the scream," thought Harry, "and even the cry for help, it is just possible that the girl was somewhat hysterical."

He made up his mind that the best thing for him to do was to get down to the real estate office with all possible speed.

Before he went, however, it occurred to him to ask the girl one question.

"Mary," he said, "you are an intelligent girl and a good observer. Can you tell me anything odd about the driver of the coach which would help to identify him?"

"Yes," was the prompt response. "He was short, thick-set, very dark, only had one eye, and was pock-marked."

"Young, middle-aged or old?"

"About forty, I should say."

"Good girl," said Harry, and then away he went. Over to Broadway he hurried, running every step of the way, caught a car as he reached the corner, and went bowling downtown.

He jumped off in front of the real estate office, and his heart beat violently when he caught sight of Mr. Herbert and Frank talking outside the door.

"Another trap; another scheme," muttered the boy. "What does the villain threaten us with this time?"

Like a wave there came over him the recollections of the conversation in Mr. Herbert's library, when he and Harry had agreed that some other motive than gain was at the bottom of Mace's active enmity.

That there was some mysterious motive underlying Mace's hostility could no longer be doubted.

Mr. Herbert's face was quite radiant, and Harry could see how rejoiced the worthy man was to know that the evidence of his son's crime was no longer in existence.

"God bless you, Harry Hale," he warmly said, as the boy came up to him. "You have taken a load from my heart."

"I greatly fear that you will soon lose your lightness of heart, sir," regretfully said Harry, and handed him the letter.

Mr. Herbert read it and re-read it.

"I don't understand this," he said.

Briefly as possible, Harry narrated to him all about the scream, the carriage and the story told by the servant.

Mr. Herbert's face blanched.

"My girl has been abducted," he hoarsely whispered. "This must be the work of that villain, Harlington Mace!"

"No doubt," said Harry. "While I was changing my clothes, preparatory to visiting Gussie, Mace concocted and carried out this scheme."

"Come into the office and sit down," requested Mr. Herbert, whose limbs were trembling.

He led the way into the private office, and Harry and Frank followed him.

When the door was closed, Mr. Herbert turned to Harry.

"What's to be done?" he asked, in the most helpless manner.

"Shall we go to the police?"

"Yes, you should do that at once, but it will not prevent me carrying out a scheme I have thought of," returned Harry.

"Do what you think best, Harry. You have done some wonderful work so far."

Harry turned to Frank.

"What is the nearest hack stand to Mace's residence?"

"Madison Square."

"Does he usually order hacks from there if he wants them?"

"Yes."

"Have you been out with him occasionally in the hacks ordered from there?"

"Frequently."

"Had he any favorite drivers?"

"Yes, two."

"Do you know their names?"

"Yes; one is named Brown, and the other goes by the nickname of Shorty."

"Is Shorty thick-set, very dark, one-eyed and pock-marked?"

"Yes," ejaculated Frank, very much surprised. "That is his exact description."

"Then my scheme can probably be made to work without much trouble or delay," delightfully remarked Harry. "When Mace wanted Shorty or Brown, and wanted them to come to his residence, how did he let them know?"

"He'd go to the drug store on the corner and telephone to the District Messenger office near the hack stand, and one of the boys would run out and tell the hackman, always getting a dime for his trouble."

"Good enough. Now, Frank, I want you to go to Mace's house, and find out by some means if he is there. Whether he is in the house or not, I want you to watch the premises until I whistle for you from the corner of the street, which will be within the next hour. Now, away with you, and stick to your post until I come, even if it keeps you there for hours."

"I'm off," eagerly said Frank, and away went Gussie's brother, blindly obeying the commands of the brainy boy who had proved so far to be a brave and sagacious counselor.

"Now, Mr. Herbert," confidently said Harry, turning to the sorrowing father, "please let me have a few five-dollar bills to use in carrying out this plan of mine. Of course, I cannot guarantee the success of the scheme, but if everything goes as I think it will, your daughter will be restored to your arms in a few hours. Then, as I love trade instead of battle, I hope to settle down to business once more."

CHAPTER XXIII.

HARRY HALE'S CLEVER SCHEME.

Harry Hale meant just exactly what he said.

Of course, it was all very well to gain the praise and approval of the family he had so signally helped in their distress, and it was gratifying to be able to accomplish results with either brains or fists, as circumstances demanded, but Harry didn't care for fisticuffs, and he had no desire to play the part of an amateur detective.

The peaceful triumphs of business were much more congenial to his quiet tastes, and he hoped to be soon in a position to resume his intelligent efforts to master the details of the real estate and insurance business.

Provided with the money he had received from the much-distressed father, Harry left the sorrowful man and boarded a car bound uptown.

Reaching Madison Square, he left the car, and made his way to the hack stand.

Rapidly, he scanned the idle drivers as they sat just within the open doorways of their vehicles, or gossiped in groups upon the sidewalk.

Shorty was not there.

Harry walked steadily on, walked into the broad hallway which led to the offices of a big dramatic agency, and took up his post in a shady corner.

This was about fifty feet distant from where the majority of the hacks stood, and enabled him to watch unseen.

There he stood for fully an hour, pretending to read a newspaper, but keeping a keen eye on the line of hacks.

At length his vigil was rewarded.

A hack rolled up, and from both slight recollection and description, Harry recognized the driver as Shorty, the hackman who had helped abduct Gussie Herbert.

The hackman descended from his seat, drew out a pipe, filled it with tobacco, lighted it, and then squatted in the open doorway of his vehicle, as hackmen are wont to do.

"Good!" ejaculated Harry. "That means that he has nothing to do, and is going to enjoy a quiet whiff of the pipe."

Leaving his post of observation, Harry made his way across toward Mace's residence.

It was only seven or eight blocks away, and he soon reached the corner of the block wherein the house was located.

There he found Frank Herbert, jammed close to the body of a big tree, his eyes fixed upon Mace's house.

"Well?" asked Harry.

"He's there now. He came in not more than ten minutes ago."

"In a carriage?"

"No; afoot."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"Did you pass by the house since I sent you up here?"

"Yes, I did."

"Do you know if the outside vestibule door is open now?"

"I think it is. In fact, I have never known that outside door to be locked, either day or night. It has a different lock from the inside vestibule door, and would require an extra key, and on that account Mace never does more than shut it."

"So far, so good," said Harry. "Now, I want you to go to the drug store on the next corner and telephone to the messenger office for Shorty."

"To come where?"

"To Mace's house."

"Ah!"

"And tell them to instruct Shorty to hurry up, as Mace is waiting."

"I understand."

"Then come back, and try to sneak into the vestibule of Mace's house as unobtrusively as you can. I shall be standing between the doors myself, and when the hack rolls up I am going to run down the steps, stop him even before he reaches Mace's door, if I possibly can, and go away in the coach."

"You?"

"Yes; that's part of my plan. Where is Mace's room in that house?"

"Second floor, back."

"Then he may not hear or see the coach when it comes up, but for fear that he may, and endeavor to find out what it's all about, I want you to hold on to the vestibule door, and prevent him from coming out until Shorty has driven me away."

"Very well."

"You fully understand the part that you are to carry out?"

"Yes."

"Then summon the hack. Shorty is smoking his pipe in Madison Square, and will respond at once."

Away went Frank Herbert, and Harry saw him enter the drug store on the farther corner of the block.

Harry waited a couple of minutes, scanning the front of Mace's house meanwhile.

It looked uninhabited, the blinds being all tightly closed.

Feeling sure that no prying eyes were looking out, Harry walked quickly along the street, his hat drawn down over his eyes.

He reached Mace's house.

With a series of short, noiseless bounds, made as quickly and as lightly as if he were a great cat, Harry bounded up the steps and into the vestibule, the front door of which was slightly ajar.

Arrived there, Harry opened the big newspaper he had carried all the way from the real estate office, produced a piece of rather heavy cord, and proceeded to make up a very good imitation bundle, which was as bulky as it was light.

A moment later, Frank Herbert crept lightly up the steps and entered the vestibule.

"All right?" asked Harry.

"All right," was the reply.

"Then he'll be rolling along here in a minute, and I can take no chances of interruption from within," said Harry. "Take this heavy cord, slip a loop around the handle of the inner door, wind your handkerchief around your hand to prevent slipping or cutting, and then hold on. If any one tries to open the door from the inside, just brace your feet against the jamb and lean back. Then you'll have your weight as well as your strength to help you."

Frank nodded.

"And you don't want me to go with you?" he asked.

"No. It is probably that Shorty may know that you are not in good standing with Mace, and your appearance would create suspicion."

At that moment the sounds made by a rapidly-approaching carriage were heard.

"Here he comes," said Harry. "Hold on tightly to the door, Frank."

He drew forth one of the bank bills given him by Mr. Herbert, held that in one hand, clutched the bulky bundle with the other, and darted out of the vestibule.

Down the steps he ran.

The coach was rolling up at a lively gait, Shorty on the box.

Harry ran toward him.

"Hold up!" he said, managing to halt him a couple of doors away from Mace's house, and holding up the bank note, he said: "Mace sent this out to you."

"Thanks," was Shorty's brief acknowledgment, and at once clutched the money.

"He says not to spare your team, and to make good time. You're to carry me to the girl, and let me deliver this bundle and a letter to her, and then you're to get back here as lively as possible, and take him somewhere uptown."

And in the most assured style, our hero opened the door of the coach.

"Here!" cried Shorty; "what girl are you talking about?"

"The one you took away from 248 ——— Street a couple of hours ago. These clothes are for her."

He indicated the bundle when he spoke of clothes, and without more ado, jumped into the hack and closed the door.

His cool assurance carried everything before it.

Shorty cracked his whip, and away rattled the coach.

Harry breathed a sigh of relief.

The first step in his scheme to rescue Gussie Herbert had succeeded.

Whether the other steps of the scheme would succeed as well, he would soon know; but Harry felt confident that his well-laid plan was going to work admirably.

Across town the hack rolled, and then downtown for a mile or more.

It passed into a second-class neighborhood, and finally pulled up in front of a shabby house in the middle of a block.

Out got Harry.

"Get back as lively as you can," he said, "for Mace is in a great hurry."

"All right," responded Shorty, turning about with his team.

Taking it for granted that an experienced driver like Shorty had stopped directly before the right house, Harry didn't even ask him a question about it, but ran up the steps and pulled the bell, believing that the hackman, who was slowly wheeling about in the narrow street, would call out to him if he was in error.

Shorty didn't even glance back at him.

Just as the coach started away on its return trip, the door was opened.

A hard-featured woman of middle age stood there, and Shorty waved his hand to her in a sort of salute.

"Mr. Mace sent me over with a bundle for the girl," glibly said Harry, pushing his way into the hallway with the utmost nerve and assurance; "and I've got a message to deliver to her, too. Oh, by the way, Mr. Mace sent this over to you, and says for you to be extra careful and sharp, and you may get a handful of the same."

And as he spoke, he held out the new and crisp bank bill which he had drawn from his pocket.

"Thanks," said the woman, and, like Shorty, she clutched the bill.

"Now," said Harry, "if you'll show me the way, I'll deliver the bundle and the message to the girl."

"All right," said the woman. "Follow me."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RESCUE—CONCLUSION.

Much elated with the success of his scheme so far, Harry Hale prepared to follow the woman up the stairs.

Just as she put her foot on the second step, the woman seemed to recall something.

She leaned over the baluster and called:

"Father, hurry up here."

"All right, Sarah," responded a voice from below.

A moment later a man, who looked to be over sixty years of age, came slowly up from the basement.

He was a besotted, sleepy-looking person, and wore a rusty silk hat, which seemed too large for him.

"Taking a nap?" asked the woman.

"Yes," said the man.

"You can finish it in that," said his daughter, indicating an armchair that stood near the door, and as the old fellow dropped heavily into the chair with a somnolent grunt, the woman continued on up the stairs with Harry at her heels.

"I suppose you work for Mace?" ventured the woman, in a gossiping way, as she plodded up the stairs.

"I've had a hand in his affairs for some time past," truthfully returned Harry.

"He's mighty clever," went on the woman. "It's not many that can match him."

"True enough," responded Harry. "You might find just one here and there capable of upsetting his schemes."

"Here we are," announced his guide, puffing for breath as she reached the top floor of the house. "She's in here in this little hall bedroom."

She threw open the door.

Harry glanced in.

He saw a small bedroom, containing a bed, a chair and a washing stand.

The window was fastened tightly, and the room was so hot that a warm wave of air came out into the hallway as the door was thrown open.

On the solitary chair, her eyes red with weeping, her attitude one of deepest dejection, sat Gussie Herbert.

Without looking up from the floor, the poor girl cried out:

"Why can't you stay away and let me be?"

"Talk to her," whispered Harry, getting behind the woman, and gently urging her to enter the bedroom in advance of him.

In went the woman.

Harry followed and immediately closed the door.

"Gussie," he said.

The girl looked up quickly.

"Oh, Harry! Harry!" she joyfully cried; "take me away."

"Why, what's all——"

The woman had uttered just these three words in a tone of suspicion when Harry Hale caught her by the back of the neck and the lower part of one leg, getting the double hold quickly and surely.

Then upon the bed Harry dashed her with immense force.

She fairly bounced, like an enormous rubber ball, but the result was to render her breathless and half stunned.

Then Harry caught up the ends of the snowy counterpane.

With a dexterous turn of his hands he rolled the woman twice over, enveloping her in the folds of the bed-spread, and then picking up one of the sheets he used that for a rope, and in a moment had the creature tied up snug and secure.

Then he took a large cork from his pocket, thrust it into the woman's open mouth, picked up a towel from the washing-stand and used it as a bandage over the mouth, and then, in much less time than it takes to describe the operation, had the woman bound and gagged.

Gussie watched him in silence, spellbound with admiration.

"How brave, how smart, how all-conquering he is," she thought, and now that Harry was here her fears disappeared.

"There, that settles you!" announced our hero, as he straight-

ened up and contemplated the helpless woman with satisfaction. "Gussie, do you know how many people are in the house?"

"No, I do not."

"Well, there's an elderly gentleman dozing in the hallway below, and I think he is the only real obstacle between us and the open street. I'll go down first and dispose of him."

"Oh, don't leave me."

"You go down one flight with me, and keep out of sight at the head of the stairs, and I'll call to you when to come down."

"All right."

Harry picked the other sheet up from the bed and led the way softly downstairs to the next floor, the girl following closely at his heels.

When he reached the next floor Harry glanced slyly over the baluster and saw the old man nodding in the chair.

The rusty silk hat, which positively was much too large for him, was wobbling from one side of his head to the other.

Harry fixed his eyes upon the hat, and at once an idea was suggested to him which made the boy smile.

With a cat-like step he crept down the stairs and approached the old man.

The latter dozed on, unconscious that danger was near.

Fairly in front of the man Harry halted.

The antiquated tile had a very wide brim, and the boy seized this with his hands.

One hearty downward tug he gave, and forced the hat over the old man's ears and almost down to his shoulders.

A series of stifled gasps, snorts, curses and exclamations came from within the hat, and the old man instinctively raised his hands to clutch at the brim.

Before he got them halfway up, however, Harry gave the sheet a quick twirl and completely enveloped the old fellow, pulling him from the chair and rolling him gently over the floor.

"Come, Gussie!" he called.

Down the stairs came Gussie Herbert like a gazelle.

Harry drew back the catch of the lock, flung the door open and he and Gussie passed from the house.

"Walk lively," requested Harry, and at a quick pace they went along to the next corner and reached there just in time to catch a car that was bound uptown.

When they were seated in the car Gussie gave Harry her hand.

"You have saved me, Harry," she said, "and words will never pay the obligation."

"There is no obligation," gallantly returned our hero. "I could almost thank Harlington Mace for giving me the opportunity of rendering you a service."

And then pretty Gussie Herbert blushed.

Harry changed the subject.

"What did he say to you?" he asked.

"Mace?"

"Yes."

"I haven't seen him."

"Then he was not in the carriage which took you away from home?"

"No."

"Who was?"

"That woman."

"And why did you scream?"

"Because she at once inspired me with fear and doubt, and I would have left the coach immediately. She seized me roughly and threatened me with violence. Then I screamed for help, and she caught me by the throat and swore she would strangle me if I made another sound."

"Oh!" gasped Harry, "if I had only known that when I had

her in my grasp I would have dashed her down upon the floor instead of the bed."

He choked down his resentment and again turned to Gussie.

"I know all about the manner in which you were decoyed away from home," said Harry, "for I reached there just after the coach left, had a talk with Mary, and read the letter which you threw upon the floor. Now tell me what took place after the carriage started."

"As I told you," returned Gussie. "The woman seized me by the throat."

"She really didn't mean to hurt me very much, but the act caused such a sickening sensation that I became unconscious."

"I did not recover my senses until the coach came to a stop, and I became dimly aware that the woman was shaking me roughly and telling me to rouse up."

"I was dazed, bewildered, and I suppose somewhat hysterical when the woman assisted me from the carriage and helped me into the house."

"She half carried me upstairs to the room in which you found me, and I almost fell upon the bed. The woman bathed my face and hands and began to talk very sweetly to me. I really cannot remember what she said, only her honeyed tones, but I was just in the mood to be annoyed, and I told her not to pester me. Without another word she left me, locking the door. After a while tears came to my relief, and there I sat until you came."

"Well, this is mysterious," said Harry. "Here is our corner, Gussie. We'll only have to walk a few blocks across and a half block up to reach your house."

* * * * *

There is but little left to complete the story of the boyhood of Harry Hale.

Needless to say Harry and Gussie were received with cries of joy at the home of his employer and no one could do enough to thank the boy for the daring work he had done.

Mr. Herbert was thoroughly enraged at the last act of Harlington Mace, which seemed to be prompted by nothing more than fiendish animosity against the man he had planned to rob and whose son he had nearly ruined.

Detectives were set on his trail and he was soon arrested. He is now serving a term in Sing Sing, having been convicted of the crime of kidnaping and abduction.

Harry is now employed as managing clerk for Mr. Herbert at a good salary.

Moreover, Mr. Herbert's limited partnership with Wainwright and Strong will expire in about two years, and Harry and Gussie, who spend their evenings together now, feel sure that the firm will be reorganized under the style of Herbert, Hale & Herbert, and include the senior partner's son and also his prospective son-in-law.

Harry's father died abroad, but with such a son to support her, Mrs. Hale scarcely felt the loss.

Well, here we are at the end of this true story of to-day, and in bidding adieu to our youthful readers, express the hope that they, too, will ever be "Upright and Honest," and may deem it conducive to their moral and material welfare to direct their footsteps toward "Harry Hale's Road to Success!"

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 34, will contain "Two Young Inventors; or, The Treasure of Three Pine Mountain."

Did you ever see a flying machine, boys? Read next week's issue and learn how two boys flew 3,000 miles on wings—one of the most exciting stories ever published.

"HELLO BROADBRIM"



NICK TO OLD BROADBRIM:—"WELL, WELL, OLD MAN, GLAD TO MEET YOU. I'VE BEEN WORKING OVERTIME TO SATISFY THE DEMAND UPON MY SERVICES. I WANT YOU TO JUMP RIGHT IN AND DO A GOOD HALF-SHARE. I KNOW YOU CAN."